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SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE OF ALEXANDER WILSON,

AUTHOR OF THE

AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY.

BY GEORGE ORD, F. L. S. &c.

PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY HARRISON HALL
1828

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PREFACE

TO

THE LIFE OF WILSON.

In the preface to the first edition of this biographical sketch, the motives of the publication are stated, and the peculiar circumstances under which its author was placed, in respect to materials, are detailed; there is, therefore, no need of repeating them.

It has been thought proper to augment the volume, by a selection from the series of interesting letters, which were put into the writer's hands by some of Wilson's personal friends, who were anxious that these memorials should not be lost. It may be, perhaps, objected, that some of them are of too trifling a nature for publication; but let it be observed that they all, more or less, tend to throw light upon the employments, and peculiarities of character, of an individual of no every day occurrence; one of those to whose genius we would render homage, and the memory of whom we delight to cherish.

For the particulars of Wilson's early life, the writer has been indebted to a narrative, in manuscript, which was communicated to him by Mr. William Duncan. This information, coming from a nephew of Wilson's, and his confidential friend for many years, must be deemed authentic; and we have to regret that the plan and limits of our publication, did not allow us to make a freer use of what was so kindly placed at our disposal.

To Mr. Duncan, Mr. Miller, and Mr. Lawson, the writer owes many obligations, for the promptitude with which they intrusted to him their letters; and his acknowledgments are equally due to Colonel Robert Carr, who furnished him with the letters to the late William Bartram. The friendship which subsisted between Wilson and the latter was of the most exalted kind; and the warm expression of confidence and regard which characterize these letters, will afford a proof of how much of the writer's happiness was derived from this amiable intercourse. The reader's obligations to Colonel Carr will not be lessened, when it is sta-

ted, that the greater part of these interesting epistles were mislaid during the latter days of the venerable botanist to whom they were addressed; and that it was through the care of the abovementioned gentleman they were rescued from oblivion.

It will be long ere the lovers of science will cease to deplore the event, which snatched from us one so eminently gifted for natural investigations, by his zeal, his industry, his activity, and his intelligence; one who, after a successful prosecution of his great undertaking through a series of eventful years, was deprived of his merited reward, at the moment when he was about putting the finishing hand to those labours, which have secured to him an imperishable renown. "The hand of death," says Pliny, "is ever, in my estimation, too severe, and too sudden, when it falls upon such as are employed in some immortal work. The sons of sensuality, who have no other views beyond the present hour, terminate with each day the whole purpose of their lives; but those who look forward to posterity, and endeavour to extend their memories to future generations by useful labours;—to such, death is always immature, as it still snatches them from amidst some unfinished design."

But although that Being, who so often frustrates human purposes, thought proper, in his wisdom, to terminate the "unfinished design" of our lamented friend, yet were his aspirations after an honourable distinction in society fully answered. The poor despised weaver of Paisley takes his rank among the writers of our country; and after ages shall look up to the Father of American Ornithology, and bless that Providence, which, by inscrutable ways, led him to the only spot, perhaps, of the civilized earth, where his extraordinary talents would be encouraged to develop themselves, and his estimable qualities of heart would be duly appreciated.

Wilson has proved to us what genius and industry can effect in despite of obstacles, which men of ordinary abilities would consider insurmountable. His example will not be disregarded; and his success will be productive of benefits, the extent of which cannot now be estimated.

SKETCH

OF

THE LIFE OF ALEXANDER WILSON.

Alexander Wilson was born in the town of Paisley, in the west of Scotland, on the sixth day of July, 1766. His father, who was also named Alexander, followed the distilling business; an humble occupation, which neither allowed him much time for the improvement of his mind, nor yielded him much more than the necessaries of life. He was illiterate and poor, and died on the 5th June, 1816, at the age of eighty-eight. His mother was a native of Jura, one of the Hebrides or Western Islands of Scotland. She is said to have been a woman of delicate health, but of good understanding; and passionately fond of Scotch music, a taste for which she early inculcated on her son; who, in his riper years, cultivated it as one of the principal amusements of his life. She died when Alexander was about ten years old, leaving him, and two sisters, to mourn their irreparable loss; a loss which her affectionate son never ceased to deplore, as it deprived him of his best friend; one who had fostered his infant mind; and who had looked forward, with fond expectation, to that day,

> "When, clad in sable gown, with solemn air,
> "The walls of God's own house should echo back his prayer:"

for it appears to have been her wish that he should be educated for the ministry.

At a school in Paisley, Wilson was taught the common rudiments of learning. But what proficiency he made, whether he was distinguished from his schoolmates or not, my memo-

rials of his early life do not inform me. It appears that he was initiated in the elements of the Latin tongue; but having been removed from school at the age of twelve or thirteen, the amount of knowledge acquired could not have been great; and I have reason to believe that he never afterwards resumed the study. His early productions show that his English education had not only been greatly circumscribed, but very imperfect. He wrote, as all self-taught authors write, carelessly and incorrectly; his sentences, constructed by the ear, often displease one by their gross violations of the rules of grammar; an essential part of learning to which he never seriously applied himself, until, after his arrival in America, he found it necessary to qualify himself for an instructor of youth.

Wilson's father, feeling the want of a helper in the government of an infant family, again entered into the matrimonial state. The maiden name of this second wife was Brown.

It was the intention of the father that Alexander should be educated for a physician; but this design was not relished by the son, who had, through the impertinent interference of some persons, imbibed some prejudices against the profession, which were the cause of the project's being abandoned.

It being the wish of the step-mother that the boy should be put to a trade, he was accordingly apprenticed to his brother-in-law, William Duncan, who then resided in Paisley, to learn the art of weaving. That this determination was the result of good sense there can be no doubt; the employment had the tendency to fix a disposition somewhat impetuous and wavering; and the useful knowledge acquired thereby he was enabled, at a subsequent period of life, to turn to account, when mental exertion, even with superior resources, would have availed him but little.

The scheme of being taught a trade met with little or no opposition from the subject of this memoir, his father's house no longer affording him that pleasure which it had done during the life of her who had given him existence. Some difference had arisen between him and his step-mother; whether from

undutiful conduct of his, or harsh treatment of hers, I know not; but it may be asserted with truth, that she continued an object of his aversion through life; which was manifest from the circumstance that, in the many letters which he wrote from America to his father, he seldom, if ever, mentioned her name. She is still living, and must, doubtless, feel not a little *rejoiced* that her predictions with respect to the "*lazy weaver*," as *Sandy* was termed at home, who, instead of minding his business, mispent his time in making verses, were never verified. But, in justice to her character, we must state, that, if she was an unkind step-mother, she nevertheless proved herself to be a faithful and affectionate wife; and supported, by her industry, her husband when he became, by age and infirmities, incapable of labour.

At an early period of his life Wilson evinced a strong desire for learning; and this was encouraged by a spirit of emulation which prevailed among his youthful acquaintance, who, like himself, happily devoted many of their vacant hours to literary pursuits. He had free access to a collection of magazines and essays, which, by some good luck, his father had become possessed of; and these, as he himself often asserted, "were the first books that gave him a fondness for reading and reflection." This remarkable instance of the beneficial tendency of periodical publications we record with pleasure; and it may be adduced as an argument in favour of affording patronage, in our young country, to a species of literature so well adapted to the leisure of a commercial people; and which, since the days of Addison, has had so powerful an influence on the taste and morals of the British nation.

Caledonia is fruitful of versemen: every village has its poets; and so prevalent is the habit of jingling rhymes, that a scholar is considered as possessing no taste, if he do not attune the Scottish lyre to those themes, which the *amor patriæ*, the national pride of a Scotsman, has identified with his very existence.

That poetry would attract the regard of Wilson was to be ex-

pected; it was the vehicle of sentiments which were in unison with his sanguine temperament; he had early imbibed a love of virtue, and it now assumed a romantic cast by assimilation with the high-wrought efforts of fancy, combined with the melody of song.

After an apprenticeship of about five years, Wilson became his own master; and, relinquishing the occupation of weaving, he resolved to gratify his taste for rural scenery, by journeying into the interior of the country, in the capacity of a pedler. He was now about eighteen, full of ardour and vivacity; had a constitution capable of great exertion; and a mind which promised resources amid every difficulty. Having been initiated in the art of trading, he shouldered his pack, and cheerfully set out in quest of riches. In a mind of a romantic turn, Scotland affords situations abundantly calculated to arouse all those associations which the sublime and beautiful in nature inspire. Wilson was an enthusiast; and the charms of those mountains, vallies, and streams, which had been immortalized in song, filled his soul with rapture, and incited some of the earliest efforts of his youthful muse.

To him who would accumulate wealth by trade, the muses must not be propitious. That abstraction of mind from worldly concerns which letters require, but ill qualifies one to descend to those arts, which, in order to be successfully practised, must be the unceasing objects of solicitude and attention. While the trader was feasting his eyes upon the beauties of a landscape, or enditing an elegy or a song, the auspicious moment to drive a bargain was neglected, or some more fortunate rival was allowed to supplant him. From the habit of surveying the works of nature arose an indifference to the employment of trading, which became more disgusting at each interview with the muses; and nothing but the dread of poverty induced him to conform to the vulgar avocations of common life.

Burns was now the favourite of the public; and from the unexampled success of this humble son of genius, many aspired to the honours of the laurel, who otherwise would have con-

fined their views of renown to the limited circle of their family or acquaintance. Among this number may be reckoned our Wilson; who, believing that he possessed the talent of poetical expression, ventured to exhibit his essays to his friends, whose approbation encouraged him to renewed perseverance, in the hope of emerging from that condition in society which his aspiring soul could not but disdain.

In consequence of his literary attainments, and correct moral deportment, he was admitted to the society of several gentlemen of talents and respectability, who descried in our youth the promise of eminence. Flattered by attentions, which are always grateful to the ingenuous mind, he was imboldened to the purpose of collecting and publishing his poetical attempts; hoping thereby to secure funds sufficient to enable him to persevere in the walks of learning, which, to his glowing fancy, appeared to be strewed with flowers.

In pursuance of this design he printed proposals; and, being "resolved," to adopt his own language, "to make one bold push for the united interests of Pack and Poems," he once more set out to sell his merchandise, and obtain patronage to his work.

This expedition was unprofitable: he neither advanced his fortune, nor received the encouragement of many subscriptions. Fortunate would it have been for him, if, instead of giving vent to his spleen at the supposed want of discernment of rising merit, or lack of taste for the effusions of genius, he had permitted himself to be admonished of his imprudence by the indifference of the public, and had taken that for an act of friendship, which his wounded feelings did not fail to construe into contempt.

But in defiance of discouragement he published his volume, under the title of "Poems, Humorous, Satirical and Serious." The writer of this sketch has it now before him; and finds in it the following remarks, in the hand-writing of the author himself: "I published these poems when only twenty-two—an age more abundant in *sail* than *ballast*. Reader, let this soften the rigor of criticism a little." Dated, "Gray's-Ferry,

July 6th, 1804." These poems were, in truth, the productions of a boy, who composed them under the most disadvantageous circumstances. They answered the purpose for which they were originally intended: to gratify the partiality of friendship, and alleviate moments of solitude and despondency. Their author, in his riper years, lamented his rashness in giving them to the world; and it is to be hoped that no one will be so officious as to draw them from that obscurity to which he himself sincerely rejoiced to see them condemned. They went through two small editions in octavo, the last of which appeared in 1791. The author reaped no benefit from the publication.

Mortified at the ill success of his literary undertaking, and probably with the view of withdrawing himself from associates, who, instead of advancing, rather tended to retard his studies, Wilson retired to the little village of Lochwinnoch, situated in a delightful valley, a few miles from Paisley. In this sequestered place he had before resided; and he now resorted to it, under the pressure of disappointment; and soothed his mind with the employment of letters; and spent his vacant hours amid the romantic scenery of a country, which was well calculated to captivate one who had devoted himself to the service of the muses.

While residing at Lochwinnoch he contributed some short prose essays to the Bee, a periodical work which was published at Edinburgh by Dr. Anderson. Of the merits of these essays I cannot speak, as I have never seen them. He also occasionally visited the latter place, to frequent the Pantheon, wherein a society for debate held their meetings. In this assembly of minor wits he delivered several poetical discourses, which obtained him considerable applause. The particulars of these literary peregrinations have been minutely related to me; but, at this time, I will merely state, that he always performed his journeys on foot; and that his ardour to obtain distinction, drawing him away from his profession, the only

means of procuring subsistence, he was frequently reduced to the want of the necessaries of life.

Wilson, in common with many, was desirous of becoming personally acquainted with the poet Burns, who was now in the zenith of his glory; and an accidental circumstance brought them together. The interview appeared to be pleasing to both; and they parted with the intention of continuing their acquaintance by a correspondence. But this design, though happily begun, was frustrated by an imprudent act of the former, who, in a criticism on the tale of Tam O'Shanter, remarked of a certain passage that there was "too much of the *brute*" in it. The paragraph alluded to is that which begins thus:

"Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans."

Burns, in reply, observed: "If ever you write again to so irritable a creature as a poet, I beg you will use a gentler epithet than to say there is too much of the *brute* in any thing he says or does." Here the correspondence closed.

From Lochwinnoch Wilson returned to Paisley; and again sought subsistence by mechanical labour. But at this period the result of the French revolution had become evident by the wars enkindled on the continent; and their influence on the manufactures of Great Britain, particularly those of Paisley, began to be felt. Revolution principles had also crept in among the artisans, which, superadded to the decline of business, were the means of many being thrown out of stated employment; and the distress of others was not a little aggravated by exactions which it was supposed neither policy nor justice ought to have dictated. Hence arose a misunderstanding between the manufacturers and the weavers, which soon grew into a controversy, that awakened the zeal of both parties; and Wilson, incited by principle, as well as interest, remained not idle on an occasion which seemed to demand the exercise of his talents for the benefit of the poor and the oppressed.

Among the manufacturers there was one of considerable wealth and influence; who had risen from a low origin by a

concurrence of fortunate circumstances; and who had rendered himself greatly conspicuous by his avarice and knavery. This obnoxious individual was arraigned in a galling satire, written in the Scottish dialect; which is well known to be fertile of terms of sarcasm or reproach. The piece was published anonymously; and, being suited to the taste of the multitude, was read with eagerness. But the subject of it, stung to the quick by the severity of the censure, sought revenge of his concealed enemy, who, through some unforeseen occurrence, was revealed in the person of Wilson. A prosecution for a libel was the consequence of the disclosure; and our satirist was sentenced to a short imprisonment, and to burn, with his own hands, the poem at the public cross in the town of Paisley. Wilson underwent the sentence of the law, surrounded by his friends, a gallant and numerous band, who viewed him as a martyr to the cause of honour and truth; and who, while his character was exalted in their opinion, failed not to stigmatize that of his adversary in all the bitterness of contempt. The printer, it is said, was fined for his share in the publication.

In the year 1792, Wilson wrote his characteristic tale of "Watty and Meg," the last poem which he composed in Scotland. It was published without a name; and, possessing considerable merit, was, by many, attributed to Burns. This ascription certainly showed a want of discrimination, as this production displays none of those felicities of diction, none of that peculiar intermixture of pathos and humour, which are so conspicuous in the writings of Burns. It has obtained more popularity in Scotland than any of the minor essays of our author; and has been ranked with the best productions of the Scottish muse.

Cromek, in his sketch of Wilson's life, adverting to the prosecution above mentioned, says, that "the remembrance of this misfortune dwelt upon his mind, and rendered him dissatisfied with his country. Another cause of Wilson's dejection was the rising fame of Burns, and the indifference of the

public to his own productions. He may be said to have envied the Ayrshire bard, and to this envy may be attributed his best production, 'Watty and Meg,' which he wrote at Edinburgh in 1793 (1792.) He sent it to Nielson, printer, at Paisley, who had suffered by the publication of his former poems. As it was, by the advice of his friends, published anonymously, it was generally ascribed to Burns, and went rapidly through seven or eight editions. Wilson, however, shared no part of the profits, willing to compensate for the former losses his publisher had sustained."*

The sketch above mentioned the author of this narrative showed to Wilson, and the latter told him that the relation was wanting in correctness. He pointedly denied the charge of envying the Ayrshire bard, and felt not a little scandalized at the unworthy imputation. He added, that no one entertained a more exalted idea of Burns's genius, or rejoiced more at his merited success, than himself.

Wilson now began to be dissatisfied with his lot. He was poor, and had no prospect of bettering his condition in his native country. Having heard flattering accounts of America, he conceived the design of emigrating thither, and settling in the United States.

It was some time in the latter part of the year 1793 that the resolution was formed of forsaking the land of his forefathers. His eye having been accidentally directed to a newspaper advertisement, which stated that the American ship Swift would sail from the port of Belfast, in Ireland, on the first of May following, with passengers for Philadelphia, he communicated his scheme, in confidence, to his nephew, William Duncan, then a lad of sixteen, who consented to become his fellow-traveller in the voyage; and an agreement was entered into of departing in the above mentioned ship.

The next subject of consideration was the procuring of funds; and as weaving presented the most eligible plan for this purpose, to the loom Wilson applied himself, for four months,

* Cromek's "Select Scottish Songs," vol. 2, p. 214. London, 1810.

with a diligence and economy almost surpassing belief; the whole of his expenses during this period amounting to less than one shilling per week.

All matters being finally arranged, he set out on foot for Port Patrick, whence he embarked for Ireland. On reaching Belfast it was found that the ship had her complement of passengers; but, rather than remain, after so much exertion, Wilson and his companion consented to sleep upon deck, and, consequently, they were permitted to depart in the ship, which sailed about the middle of May, and arrived at Newcastle, in the state of Delaware, on the fourteenth of July, 1794.

We now behold Alexander Wilson in a strange land; without an acquaintance on whose counsels and hospitality he could rely in that state of uncertainty to which, having no particular object in view, he was of course subjected; without a single letter of introduction; and with not a shilling in his pocket.* But every care was forgotten in his transport at finding himself in the land of freedom. He had often cast a wishful look towards the western hemisphere, and his warm fancy had suggested the idea, that among that people only, who maintained the doctrine of an equality of rights, could political justice be found. He had become indignant at beholding the influence of the wealthy converted into the means of oppression; and had imputed the wrongs and sufferings of the poor, not to the condition of society, but to the nature and constitution of the government. He was now free; and exulted in his release, as a bird rejoices which escapes from the confinement of the cage. Impatient to set his foot upon the soil of the New World, he landed at the town of Newcastle; and, shouldering his fowling-piece, he directed his steps towards Philadelphia, distant about thirty-three miles. The writer of this biography has a distinct recollection of a conversation with Wilson on this part of his

* This is literally true. The money which bore his expenses from Newcastle to Philadelphia was borrowed of a fellow passenger. The same generous friend, whose name was Oliver, made him subsequently a loan of cash to enable him to travel into Virginia.

history, wherein he described his sensations on viewing the first bird that presented itself as he entered the forests of Delaware; it was a red-headed woodpecker, which he shot, and considered the most beautiful bird he had ever beheld.

On his arrival at Philadelphia, he deliberated upon the most eligible mode of obtaining a livelihood, to which the state of his funds urged immediate attention. He made himself known to a countryman of his, Mr. John Aitken, a copper-plate printer, who, on being informed of his destitute situation, gave him employment at this business, at which he continued for a few weeks; but abandoned it for his trade of weaving, having made an engagement with Mr. Joshua Sullivan, who resided on the Pennypack creek, about ten miles north of Philadelphia.

The confinement of the loom did not agree either with Wilson's habits or inclinations; and learning that there was considerable encouragement afforded to settlers in Virginia, he migrated thither, and took up his residence near Shepherd's Town, in that part of the state known by the name of New Virginia.* Here he again found himself necessitated to engage in the same sedentary occupation; and soon becoming disgusted with the place, he returned to the mansion of his friend, Mr. Sullivan.

I find from one of his journals, that, in the autumn of the year 1795, he travelled through the north part of the state of

* The habits of the people with whom Wilson was compelled to associate, in this section of the state, it should seem, gave him no satisfaction; and the life he led added not a little to the chagrin which he suffered on finding himself an alien to those social pleasures which, hitherto, had tended to sweeten his existence. His letters at this period would, no doubt, afford some curious particulars, illustrative of his varied life; but none of them have fallen into my hands. The following extract from some of his manuscript verses will lead to the conclusion that he did not quit Virginia with regret:

> "Farewell to Virginia, to Berkley adieu,
> Where, like Jacob, our days have been evil and few!
> So few—they seem'd really but one lengthen'd curse;
> And so bad—that the Devil only could have sent worse."

New Jersey, with an acquaintance, in the capacity of a pedler, and met with tolerable success.

His diary of this journey is interesting. It was written with so much care, that one is tempted to conjecture that he spent more time in literary occupation than in vending his merchandise. It contains observations on the manners of the people; and remarks on the principal natural productions of New Jersey; with sketches of the most noted indigenous quadrupeds and birds. In these sketches one is enabled to perceive the dawning of that talent for description, which was afterwards revealed with so much lustre.

On his return from this trading adventure, he opened a school on the Oxford road, about five miles to the north of Frankford, Pennsylvania. But being dissatisfied with this situation, he removed to Milestown, and taught in the school-house of that village. In this latter place he continued for several years: and being deficient in the various branches of learning, necessary to qualify him for an instructor of youth, he applied himself to study with great diligence; and acquired all his knowledge of the mathematics, which was considerable, solely by his own exertions. To teaching he superadded the vocation of surveying; and was occasionally employed, by the neighbouring farmers, in this business.

Whilst residing at Milestown, he made a journey, on foot, to the Genessee country, in the state of New York, for the purpose of visiting his nephew, Mr. William Duncan, who resided upon a small farm, which was their joint property. This farm they had been enabled to purchase through the assistance of Mr. Sullivan, the gentleman in whose employ Wilson had been, as before stated. The object of this purchase, which some might deem an act of imprudence, in those whose slender funds did not suffice without the aid of a loan, was to procure an assylum for Mr. Duncan's mother, and her family of small children, whom poverty and misfortune had, a short time before, driven to this country. This was somewhat a fa-

tiguing journey to a pedestrian, who, in the space of twenty-eight days, travelled nearly eight hundred miles.

The life of Wilson now becomes interesting, as we are enabled, by a selection from his letters, to present him to the reader as his own biographer.

TO MR. WM. DUNCAN.*

Milestown, July 1, 1800.

"Dear Bill,

"I had the pleasure of yours by the hands of Mr. P. this day; and about fours weeks ago I had another, directed to Mr. Dobson's care, both of which were as welcome to me as any thing, but your own self, could be. I am just as you left me, only my school has been thinner this season than formerly.

"I have had four letters from home, all of which I have answered. Their news are—Dull trade—provisions most exorbitantly high—R.'s sister dead—the Seedhills mill burnt to the ground—and some other things of less consequence.

* * * * * *

"I doubt much if stills could be got up in time to do any thing at the distilling business this winter. Perhaps it might be a safer way to take them up, in the spring, by the Susquehanna. But if you are determined, and think that we should engage in the business, I shall be able to send them up either way. P. tells me that his two stills cost about forty pounds. I want to hear more decisively from you before I determine. Sooner than live in a country exposed to the ague, I would remain where I am.

"O. comes out to stay with me two months, to learn surveying, algebra, &c. I have been employed in several places about this summer to survey, and have acquitted myself with credit, and to my own satisfaction. I should not be afraid to engage in any job with the instruments I have. * * *

* Mr. Duncan at this time resided upon the farm mentioned above, which was situated in the township of Ovid, Cayuga County, New York.

"S. continues to increase in bulk, money and respectability; a continual current of *elevenpenny bits* pouring in, and but few running out. * * * * * *

"We are very anxious to hear how you got up; and well pleased that you played the Horse Jockey so luckily. If you are fixed in the design of distilling, you will write me, by the first opportunity, before winter sets in, so that I may arrange matters in time.

"I have got the schoolhouse enlarged, by contributions among the neighbours. In summer the school is, in reality, not much; but in winter, I shall be able to teach with both pleasure and profit.

* * * * * *

"When I told R. of his sister's death, 'I expected so,' said Jamie, 'any other news that's curious?' So completely does long absence blunt the strongest feelings of affection and friendship. May it never be so with you and me, if we should never meet again. On my part it is impossible, except God, in his wrath, should deprive me of my present soul, and animate me with some other."

Wilson next changed his residence for one in the village of Bloomfield, New Jersey, where he again opened a school. But being advised of a more agreeable and lucrative situation, he solicited, and received, an engagement from the trustees of Union School, situated in the township of Kingsess or Kingsessing, a short distance from Gray's Ferry, on the river Schuylkill, and about four miles from Philadelphia.

This removal constituted an important era in the life of Wilson. His school-house and residence being but a short distance from Bartram's Botanic Garden, situated on the western bank of the Schuylkill: a sequestered spot, possessing attractions of no ordinary kind; an acquaintance was soon contracted with that venerable naturalist, Mr. William Bartram,*

* The author of "Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida," &c. This excellent gentleman closed his long and useful life on the 22d July, 1823, in the eighty-fourth year of his age.

which grew into an uncommon friendship, and continued without the least abatement until severed by death. Here it was that Wilson found himself translated, if we may so speak, into a new existence. He had long been a lover of the works of Nature, and had derived more happiness from the contemplation of her simple beauties, than from any other source of gratification. But he had hitherto been a mere novice; he was now about to receive instructions from one, whom the experience of a long life, spent in travel and rural retirement, had rendered qualified to teach. Mr. Bartram soon perceived the bent of his friend's mind, and its congeniality to his own; and took every pains to encourage him in a study, which, while it expands the faculties, and purifies the heart, insensibly leads to the contemplation of the glorious Author of nature himself. From his youth Wilson had been an observer of the manners of birds; and since his arrival in America he had found them objects of uncommon interest; but he had not yet viewed them with the eye of a naturalist.

Mr. Bartram possessed some works on natural history, particularly those of Catesby and Edwards. Wilson perused them attentively; and found himself enabled, even with *his* slender stock of information, to detect errors and absurdities into which these authors had fallen, from a defective mode of studying nature: a mode, which, while it led them to the repositories of dried skins and preparations, and to a reliance on hearsay evidence, subjected them to the imputation of ignorance, which their lives, devoted to the cultivation and promotion of science, certainly would not justify. Wilson's improvement was now rapid; and the judicious criticisms which he made on the above-mentioned authors, gratified his friend and instructor, who redoubled his encouraging assistance, in order to further him in a pursuit for which his genius, now beginning to develop itself, was evidently fitted.

TO MR. WM. DUNCAN.

Gray's Ferry, October 30, 1802.

"Dear Billy,

"I was favoured with your despatches a few hours ago, through the kindness of Colonel Sullivan, who called on me for that purpose. I have read and re-read, over and over again, their contents; and shall devote the remainder of this evening to reply to you, and the rest of the family, now joint tenants of the woods. By the arrival of John F. here, in August last, I received one letter from my brother David, one from Thomas W. and one for Alexander from David Wilson; and last week another packet arrived from Belfast, containing one letter from your father to myself; and to your mother, brother and brother-in-law, and yourself, one each, all of which I have herewith sent, and hope they may amuse a leisure hour. F. has been wofully disappointed in the expectations he had formed of his uncle. Instead of being able to assist him, he found him in the depth of poverty; and fast sinking under a severe fever; probably the arrival of a relation contributed to his recovery; he is now able to crawl about. F. has had one child born and buried since his arrival. He weaves with Robertson, but neither likes the situation nor employment. He is a stout, active and ingenious fellow, can turn his hand to almost any thing, and wishes as eagerly to get up to the lakes as ever a saint longed to get to heaven. He gives a most dismal description of the situation of the poor people of Scotland in 1800.

"Your letters, so long expected, have at length relieved me from much anxiety. I am very sorry that your accommodations are so few, for my sister's sake, and the children's; a fire-place and comfortable house for the winter must, if possible, be got up without delay. If masons are not to be had, I would attempt to raise a temporary one myself, I mean a fire-place—but surely they may be had, and lime and stones are also attainable by dint of industry. These observations are made not from any doubts of your doing every thing in your power to make your mother as comfortable as possible, and as your means

will enable you, but from a solicitude for a sister's health, who has sustained more distress than usual. I know the rude appearance of the country, and the want of many usual conveniences, will for some time affect her spirits; let it be your pleasure and study to banish these melancholy moments from her as much as possible. Whatever inconveniences they may for a while experience, it was well they left this devoted city. The fever, that yellow genius of destruction, has sent many poor mortals to their long homes since you departed; and the gentleman who officiates as steward to the Hospital informed me yesterday evening that it rages worse this week than at any former period this season, though the physicians have ceased reporting. Every kind of business has been at a stand these three months, but the business of death.

"You intimate your design of coming down next spring. Alexander seems to have the same intention. How this will be done, consistent with providing for the family, is not so clear to me. Let me give my counsel on the subject. You will see by your father's letters that he cannot be expected before next July, or August perhaps, a time when you must of necessity be at home. Your coming down, considering loss of time and expenses, and calculating what you might do on the farm, or at the loom, or at other jobs, would not clear you more than twenty dollars difference, unless you intended to remain here five or six months, in which time much might be done by you and Alexander on the place. I am sorry he has been so soon discouraged with farming. Were my strength but equal to my spirit, I would abandon my school for ever for such an employment. Habit will reconcile him to all difficulties. It is more healthy, more independent and agreeable than to be cooped up in a subterraneous dungeon, surrounded by gloomy damps, and breathing an unwholesome air from morning to night, shut out from Nature's fairest scenes and the pure air of heaven. When necessity demands such a seclusion, it is noble to obey; but when we are left to choice, who would bury themselves alive? It is only in winter that I would recommend the loom to both

of you. In the month of March next I shall, if well, be able to command two hundred dollars cash *once more*. Nothing stands between me and this but health, and that I hope will continue at least till then. You may then direct as to the disposal of this money—I shall freely and cheerfully yield the whole to your management. Another quarter will enable me to settle John M.'s account, about the time it will be due; and, instead of wandering in search of employment five or six hundred miles for a few dollars, I would beg of you both to unite in putting the place and house in as good order as possible. But Alexander can get nothing but wheat and butter for this *hagging* and *slashing!* Never mind, my dear namesake, put up awhile with the rough fare and rough clothing of the country. Let us only get the place in good order and you shall be no loser by it. Next summer I will assuredly come up along with your father and George, if he comes as I expect he will, and every thing shall flourish.

"My dear friend and nephew, I wish you could find a leisure hour in the evening to give the children, particularly Mary, some instruction in reading, and Alexander in writing and accounts. Don't be discouraged though they make but slow progress in both, but persevere a little every evening. I think you can hardly employ an hour at night to better purpose. And make James read every convenient opportunity. If I live to come up beside you, I shall take that burden off your shoulders. Be the constant friend and counsellor of your little colony, to assist them in their difficulties, encourage them in their despondencies, to make them as happy as circumstances will enable you. A mother, brothers and sisters, in a foreign country, looking up to you as their best friend and supporter, places you in a dignified point of view. The future remembrance of your kind duty to them now, will, in the hour of your own distress, be as a healing angel of peace to your mind. Do every thing possible to make your house comfortable—fortify the garrison in every point—stop every crevice that may let in that chilling devil, the roaring blustering northwest—heap up fires big

enough for an Indian war-feast—keep the flour-barrel full—bake loaves like Hamles Head*—make the loom thunder, and the pot boil; and your snug little cabin re-echo nothing but sounds of domestic felicity. I will write you the moment I hear of George. I shall do every thing I have said to you, and never lose sight of the eighteenth of March; for which purpose I shall keep night school this winter, and retain every farthing but what necessity requires—depend upon me. These are the outlines of *my* plan. If health stand it, all will be well; if not, we cannot help it. Ruminate on all this, and consult together. If you still think of coming down, I hope you would not hesitate for a moment to make my neighbourhood your home. If you come I shall be happy to have you once more beside me. If you resolve to stay on the farm, and put things in order as far as possible, I will think you have done what you thought best. But I forget that my paper is done.

"Robb, Orr, &c. have escaped as yet from the pestilence; but Robb's three children have all had the ague. Rabby Rowan has gone to *Davie's Locker* at last: he died in the West Indies. My brother David talks of coming to America, and my father, poor old man, would be happy to be with you, rough and uncomfortable as your situation at present is. As soon as I finish this I shall write to your mother and Alexander. There is a letter for John M., which he is requested to answer by his father-in-law. I hope John will set a firm resolute heart to the undertaking, and plant a posterity in that rich, western country, to perpetuate his name for ever. Thousands here would rejoice to be in his situation. How happy may you live thus united together in a free and plentiful country, after so many years of painful separation, where the bare necessaries of life were all that incessant drudgery could procure, and even that but barely. Should even sickness visit you, which God forbid, each of you is surrounded by almost all the friends you have in the world, to nurse you, and pity and console you; and surely it is not the least sad comfort of a death bed, to be attended by

* The name of a rock near Paisley.

affectionate relatives. Write me positively by post, two or three times. My best love to my sister, to Isabella, Alexander, John, the two Maries, James, Jeany, little Annie. God Almighty bless you all.

"Your ever affectionate friend,

"ALEX. WILSON."

TO ALEXANDER DUNCAN.

October 31, 1802.

"Dear Alexander,

"I have laughed on every perusal of your letter. I have now deciphered the whole, except the blots, but I fancy they are only by the way of *half mourning* for your doleful captivity in the back woods, where there is nothing but wheat and butter, eggs and gammon, for *hagging* down trees. Deplorable! what must be done? It is a good place, you say, for a man who has a parcel of *weans!* * * *

"But forgive this joking. I thank you, most heartily, for this your *first letter* to me; and I hope you will follow it up with many more. I shall always reply to them with real pleasure. I am glad that your chief objection to the country is want of money. No place is without its inconveniences. Want of the necessaries of life would be a much greater grievance. If you can, in your present situation, procure sufficient of these, though attended with particular disadvantages, I would recommend you to persevere where you are. I would wish you and William to give your joint labours to putting the place in as good order as possible. A farm of such land, in good cultivation, is highly valuable; it will repay all the labour bestowed upon it a hundred fold; and contains within it all the powers of plenty and independence. These it only requires industry to bring forth, and a small stock of money to begin with. The money I doubt not of being able to procure, next summer, for a year or two, on interest, independent of two hundred dollars of my own, which I hope to possess on or before the middle of March next. C. S. is very much attached to both your

brother and me; and has the means in his power to assist us—and I know he will. In the mean time, if you and William unite in the undertaking, I promise you as far as I am concerned, to make it the best plan you could pursue.

"Accustom yourself, as much as you can, to working out. Don't despise *hagging* down trees. It is hard work, no doubt; but taken moderately, it strengthens the whole sinews; and is a manly and independent employment. An old weaver is a poor, emaciated, helpless being, shivering over rotten yarn, and groaning over his empty flour barrel. An old farmer sits in his arm chair before his jolly fire, while his joists are crowded with hung beef and gammons, and the bounties of Heaven are pouring into his barns. Even the article of health is a consideration sufficient to make a young man prefer the labours of the field: for health is certainly the first enjoyment of human life. But perhaps weaving holds out advantages that farming does not. Then blend the two together; weave in the depth of winter, and work out the rest of the year. We will have it in our power, before next winter, to have a shop, looms, &c. provided. Consider all I have said, and if I have a wrong view of the subject, form your own plans, and write me without delay."

TO MR. WM. DUNCAN.

Gray's Ferry, December 23, 1802.

"The two Mr. Purdies popped into my school, this afternoon, as unexpected as they were welcome, with news from the promised land. I shall detain them with me all night, on purpose to have an opportunity of writing you a few lines. I am glad you are all well. I hope that this is the last devilish slough of despond which you will have to struggle in for some time. I will do all that I said to you, in my last, by the middle of March; so let care and sorrow be forgotten; and industry, hope, good-humour and economy, be your bosom friends.

* * * * * *

"I succeed tolerably well; and seem to gain in the esteem

of the people about. I am glad of it, because I hope it will put it in my power to clear the road a little before you, and banish despondence from the heart of my dearest friend. Be assured that I will ever as cheerfully contribute to your relief in difficulties, as I will rejoice with you in prosperity. But we have nothing to fear. One hundred bushels of wheat, to be sure, is no great marketing; but has it not been expended in the support of a mother, and infant brothers and sisters, thrown upon your bounty in a foreign country? Robert Burns, when the mice nibbled away his corn, said:

"I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
And never miss 't."

"Where he expected one, you may a thousand. Robin, by his own confession, ploughed up his mice out of *ha' and hame*. You have built for your little wanderers a *cozie bield*, where none dare molest them. There is more true greatness in the affectionate exertions which you have made for their subsistence and support, than the bloody catalogue of heroes can boast of. Your own heart will speak peace and satisfaction to you, to the last moment of your life, for every anxiety you have felt on their account. Colonel Sullivan talks with pride and affection of you.

"I wish Alexander had written me a few lines of the old German text. I laugh every time I look at his last letter: its a perfect antidote against the spleen. Well, Alexander, which is the best *fun*, handling the shuttle, or the ax? When John M. comes down, write me largely. And, dear sister, let me hear from you also. * *

"I would beg leave to suggest to you the propriety of teaching the children to behave with good manners, and dutiful respect, to yourself, each other, and every body.

"You must excuse me for any thing I may have said amiss, or any thing I may have omitted to mention. I am, with sincere attachment, your affectionate friend."

The foregoing letters place the character of Wilson in the

most amiable point of view; and they entirely supersede any remarks which I might make upon those social affections that distinguished him through life.

In his new situation Wilson had many enjoyments; but he had likewise moments of despondency, which solitude tended to confirm. He had addicted himself to the writing of verses, and to music; and, being of a musing turn of mind, had given way to those seductive feelings, which the charming scenery of the country, in a sensible heart, never fails to awaken. This was a fatal bias, which all his efforts could not counteract or remove. His acquaintance perceived the danger of his state; and one in whose friendship he had placed strong reliance, and to whom he had freely unburthened himself, Mr. Lawson, the engraver, entertained apprehensions for the soundness of his intellect.* There was one subject which contributed not a little to increase his mental gloom, and this was the consideration of the life of penury and dependence to which he seemed destined as the teacher of a country school. Mr. Lawson immediately recommended the renouncing of poetry and the flute, and the substituting of the amusement of drawing in their stead, as being most likely to restore the balance of his mind; and as an employment well adapted to one of his recluse habits and inclinations. To this end, sketches of the human figure, and landscapes, were provided for him; but his attempts were so unpromising that he threw them aside with disgust; and concluded that one at his period of life could never succeed in

* The following incident was communicated to me by Colonel Carr, who had it from Wilson himself. While the latter laboured under great depression of spirits, in order to sooth his mind he one day rambled with his gun. The piece by accident slipped from his hand, and, in making an effort to regain it, the lock was cocked. At that moment had the gun gone off, it is more than probable that he would have lost his life, as the muzzle was opposite to his breast. When Wilson reflected on the danger which he had escaped, he shuddered at the idea of the imputation of suicide, which a fatal occurrence, to one in his frame of mind, would have occasioned. There is room to conjecture that many have accidentally met their end, whose memories have been sullied by the alleged crime of self murder.

the art of delineation. Mr. Bartram now advised a trial at birds; and being tolerably skilful himself, exhibited his portfolio, which was graced with many specimens from his own hands. The attempt was made, and succeeded beyond the expectation of Wilson, or that of his friends. There was a magic in the employment which aroused all the energies of his soul; he saw, as it were, the dayspring of a new creation; and, from being the humble follower of his instructors, he was soon qualified to lead the way in the charming art of imitating the works of the GREAT ORIGINAL.

That Wilson likewise undertook the task of delineating flowers, appears from the following note to Mr. Bartram, dated *Nov.* 20th, 1803:

"I have attempted two of those prints which Miss Nancy* so obligingly, and with so much honour to her own taste, selected for me. I was quite delighted with the anemone, but fear I have made but bungling work of it. Such as they are I send them for your inspection and opinion; neither of them is quite finished. For your kind advice towards my improvement I return my most grateful acknowledgments.

"The duties of my profession will not admit me to apply to this study with the assiduity and perseverance I could wish. Chief part of what I do is sketched by candle-light; and for this I am obliged to sacrifice the pleasures of social life, and the agreeable moments which I might enjoy in company with you and your amiable friend. I shall finish the other some time this week; and shall be happy if what I have done merit your approbation."

As Wilson advanced in drawing, he made corresponding progress in the knowledge of Ornithology. He had perused the works of some of the naturalists of Europe, who had written on the subject of the birds of America, and became so disgusted with their caricatured figures, fanciful theories, fables and misrepresentations, that on turning, as he himself observes, from these barren and musty records to the magnificent repo-

* Mr. Bartram's niece, now the consort of Col. Carr.

sitory of the woods and fields—the *Grand Aviary of Nature*, his delight bordered on adoration. It was not in the inventions of man that the DIVINE WISDOM could be traced; but it was visible in the volume of creation, wherein are inscribed the AUTHOR'S lessons of goodness and love, in the conformation, the habitudes, melody and migrations, of the feathered tribes, that beautiful portion of the work of his hands.

To invite the attention of his fellow-citizens to a study, attended with so much pleasure and improvement, was the natural wish of one who had been educated in the School of Wisdom. He humbly thought it would not be rendering an unacceptable service to the GREAT MASTER OF CREATION himself, to derive from objects that every where present themselves in our rural walks, not only amusement and instruction, but the highest incitements to piety and virtue. Moreover, self-gratification, that source of so many of our virtuous actions, had its share in urging him to communicate his observations to others * He examined the strength of his mind, and its resources; the undertaking seemed hazardous; he pondered it for a long while before he ventured to mention it to his friends. At length the subject was made known to Mr. Bartram, who freely expressed his confidence in the abilities and acquirements of Wilson; but, from a knowledge of the situation and circumstances of the latter, hinted his fears that the difficulties which stood in the way of such an enterprise were almost too great to be overcome. Wilson was not easily intimidated; the very mention of difficulties suggested to his mind the means of surmounting them, and the glory which would accrue from such an achievement. He had a ready answer to every objection of his cautious friend; and evinced such enthusiasm, that Mr. Bartram trembled lest his intemperate zeal should lead him into a situation, from the embarrassments of which he could not well be extricated.

The scheme was unfolded to Mr. Lawson, and met with his cordial approbation. But he observed that there were several

* Introduction to vol. i.

considerations which should have their weight, in determining in an affair of so much importance. These were frankly stated; and followed by advice, which did not quadrate with the temperament of Wilson; who, vexed that his friend would not enter into his feelings, expressed his scorn of the maxims of prudence with which he was assailed, by styling them the offspring of a *cold*, *calculating*, *selfish* philosophy. Under date of March 12th, 1804, he thus writes to the last named gentleman:

"I dare say you begin to think me very ungenerous and unfriendly in not seeing you for so long a time. I will simply state the cause, and I know you will excuse me. Six days in one week I have no more time than just to swallow my meals, and return to my *Sanctum Sanctorum*. Five days of the following week are occupied in the same routine of *pedagoguing* matters; and the other two are sacrificed to that itch for drawing, which I caught from your honourable self. I never was more wishful to spend an afternoon with you. In three weeks I shall have a few days vacancy, and mean to be in town chief part of the time. I am most earnestly bent on pursuing my plan of making a collection of all the birds in this part of North America. Now I don't want you to throw cold water, as Shakspeare says, on this notion, Quixotic as it may appear. I have been so long accustomed to the building of airy castles and brain windmills, that it has become one of my earthly comforts, a sort of a rough bone, that amuses me when sated with the dull drudgery of life."

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

March 29, 1804.

"Three months have passed away since I had the pleasure of seeing you; and three dark and heavy months they have been to your family. My heart has shared in your distress, and sincerely sympathises with you for the loss you have sustained. But Time, the great curer of every grief, will gradually heal those wounds which Misfortune has inflicted; and

many years of tranquillity and happiness are, I sincerely hope, reserved for you.

"I have been prevented from seeing you so long by the hurry of a crowded school, which occupied all my hours of daylight, and frequently half the others. The next quarter will leave me time enough; and, as there is no man living in whose company I have more real satisfaction, I hope you will pardon me if I now and then steal a little of your leisure.

"I send for your amusement a few attempts at some of our indigenous birds, hoping that your good nature will excuse their deficiencies, while you point them out to me. I intended to be the bearer of them myself, but having so many little accounts to draw up before to-morrow, I am compelled to plead this as my excuse. I am almost ashamed to send you these drawings; but I know your generous disposition will induce you to encourage one in whom you perceive a sincere and eager wish to do well. They were chiefly coloured by candle-light.

"I have now got my collection of native birds considerably enlarged; and shall endeavour, if possible, to obtain all the smaller ones this summer. Be pleased to mark on the drawings, with a pencil, the names of each bird, as, except three or four, I do not know them. I shall be extremely obliged to you for every hint that will assist me in this agreeable amusement.

"I am very anxious to see the performances of your fair pupil; and beg you would assure her from me that any of the birds I have are heartily at her service. Surely Nature is preferable, to copy after, to the works of the best masters, though perhaps more difficult; for I declare that the face of an owl, and the back of a lark, have put me to a nonplus; and if Miss Nancy will be so obliging as to try her hand on the last mentioned, I will furnish her with one in good order; and will copy her drawing with the greatest pleasure; having spent almost a week on two different ones, and afterwards destroyed them both, and got nearly in the slough of despond."

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

Kingsessing, March, 31, 1804.

"I take the first few moments I have had since receiving your letter, to thank you for your obliging attention to my little attempts at drawing; and for the very affectionate expressions of esteem with which you honour me. But sorry I am, indeed, that afflictions so severe, as those you mention, should fall where so much worth and sensibility reside, while the profligate, the unthinking and unfeeling, so frequently pass through life, strangers to sickness, adversity or suffering. But God visits those with distress whose enjoyments he wishes to render more exquisite. The storms of affliction do not last for ever; and sweet is the serene air, and warm sunshine, after a day of darkness and tempest. Our friend has, indeed, passed away, in the bloom of youth and expectation; but nothing has happened but what almost every day's experience teaches us to expect. How many millions of beautiful flowers have flourished and faded under your eye; and how often has the whole profusion of blossoms, the hopes of a whole year, been blasted by an untimely frost. He has gone only a little before us; we must soon follow; but while the feelings of nature cannot be repressed, it is our duty to bow with humble resignation to the decisions of the great Father of all, rather receiving with gratitude the blessings he is pleased to bestow, than repining at the loss of those he thinks proper to take from us. But allow me, my dear friend, to withdraw your thoughts from so melancholy a subject, since the best way to avoid the force of any overpowering passion, is to turn its direction another way.

"That lovely season is now approaching, when the garden, woods and fields, will again display their foliage and flowers. Every day we may expect strangers, flocking from the south, to fill our woods with harmony. The pencil of Nature is now at work, and outlines, tints, and gradations of lights and shades, that baffle all description, will soon be spread before us by that great master, our most benevolent friend and father. Let us

cheerfully participate in the feast he is preparing for all our senses. Let us survey those millions of green strangers, just peeping into day, as so many happy messengers come to proclaim the power and munificence of the Creator. I confess that I was always an enthusiast in my admiration of the rural scenery of Nature; but, since your example and encouragement have set me to attempt to imitate her productions, I see new beauties in every bird, plant or flower, I contemplate; and find my ideas of the incomprehensible first cause still more exalted, the more minutely I examine his works.

"I sometimes smile to think that while others are immersed in deep schemes of speculation and aggrandizement—in building towns and purchasing plantations, I am entranced in contemplation over the plumage of a lark, or gazing like a despairing lover, on the lineaments of an owl. While others are hoarding up their bags of money, without the power of enjoying it, I am collecting, without injuring my conscience, or wounding my peace of mind, those beautiful specimens of Nature's works that are for ever pleasing. I have had live crows, hawks and owls—opossums, squirrels, snakes, lizards, &c., so that my room has sometimes reminded me of Noah's ark; but Noah had a wife in one corner of it, and in this particular our parallel does not altogether tally. I receive every subject of natural history that is brought to me, and though they do not march into my ark, from all quarters, as they did into that of our great ancestor, yet I find means, by the distribution of a few five penny *bits*, to make them find the way fast enough. A boy, not long ago, brought me a large basket full of crows. I expect his next load will be bull-frogs, if I don't soon issue orders to the contrary. One of my boys caught a mouse in school, a few days ago, and directly marched up to me with his prisoner. I set about drawing it that same evening, and all the while the pantings of its little heart showed it to be in the most extreme agonies of fear. I had intended to kill it, in order to fix it in the claws of a stuffed owl, but happening to spill a few drops of water near where it was tied, it lapped it up with such

eagerness, and looked in my face with such an eye of supplicating terror, as perfectly overcame me. I immediately untied it, and restored it to life and liberty. The agonies of a prisoner at the stake, while the fire and instruments of torment are preparing, could not be more severe than the sufferings of that poor mouse; and, insignificant as the object was, I felt at that moment the sweet sensations that mercy leaves on the mind when she triumphs over cruelty.

"My dear friend, you see I take the liberty of an old acquaintance with you, in thus trifling with your time. You have already raised me out of the slough of despond, by the hopes of your agreeable conversation, and that of your amiable pupil. Nobody, I am sure, rejoices more in her acquisition of the beautiful accomplishment of drawing than myself. I hope she will persevere. I am persuaded that any pains you bestow on her will be rewarded beyond your expectations. Besides, it will be a new link in that chain of friendship and consanguinity by which you are already united; though I fear it will be a powerful addition to that attraction which was fully sufficient before, to make even a virtuoso quit his owls and opossums, and think of something else."

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

May 21, 1804.

"I send you a few more imitations of birds for your opinion, which I value beyond that of any body else, though I am seriously apprehensive that I am troublesome. These are the last I shall draw for some time, as the employment consumes every leisure moment, leaving nothing for friendship, or those rural recreations which I so much delight in. Even poetry, whose heavenly enthusiasm I used to glory in, can hardly ever find me at home, so much has this bewitching amusement engrossed all my senses.

"Please to send me the names of the birds. I wish to draw a small flower, in order to represent the Humming-bird in the act of feeding: will you be so good as to send me one suitable,

and not too large? The legs and feet of some are unfinished; they are all miserably imperfect, but your generous candour I know to be beyond all their defects."

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

June 15, 1804.

"I have arranged my business for our little journey; and, if to-morrow be fair, I shall have the chaise ready for you at any time in the morning, say seven o'clock. Or if you think any other hour more suitable, please to let me know by the bearer, and I shall make it answerable to me."

June 16, 1804.

"I believe we had better put off our intended jaunt until some more auspicious day.

"Clouds, from Eastern regions driven,
Still obscure the gloomy skies;
Let us yield, since angry Heaven
Frowns upon our enterprise.

"Haply some unseen disaster
Hung impending o'er our way,
Which our kind Almighty Master
Saw, and sought us thus to stay.

"By and by, when fair Aurora
Bids the drowsy fogs to fly,
And the glorious god of Flora
Rises in a cloudless sky,

"Then, in whirling chariot seated,
With my friend I'll gladly go:
With his converse richly treated—
Happy to be honoured so."

The inconveniences of his situation, as teacher of a country school, determined Wilson to endeavour after some employment more congenial to his disposition; and that would enable him to attain to that distinction, as a scholar, which he was anxious to merit. He consequently directed his views to the "Literary Magazine," conducted by C. B. Brown, a monthly

publication of some note, as a suitable vehicle for the diffusion of those productions which he hoped would arrest the attention of the public. In this magazine appeared his "Rural Walk," and his "Solitary Tutor;" but it does not appear that their author received any other reward for his well-meant endeavours than the thanks of the publisher. He was flattered, it is true, by a republication, in the Port Folio, of the "Rural Walk," with some "commendations of its *beauties;*" but I must confess that my perspicacity has not enabled me to detect them.

The then editor of the Port Folio, Mr. Dennie, enjoyed the reputation of being a man of taste and judgment; and the major part of his selections should seem to prove that his character, in these respects, was well founded. But with regard to the poem in question, I am totally at a loss to discover by what principles of criticism he judged it, seeing that his opinion of it will by no means accord with mine. The initial stanza, which is not an unfair specimen of the whole, runs thus:

> "The summer sun was riding high,
> The woods in deepest verdure drest;
> From care and clouds of dust to fly,
> Across yon bubbling brook I past."

The reader of classical poetry may well pardon me if, out of an effusion consisting of forty-four stanzas, I save him the task of perusing any more than one.

TO MR. LAWSON.

Gray's Ferry, August 14, 1804.

"Dear Sir,

"Enclosed is a copy of the "*Solitary Tutor,*" which I should like to see in the "Literary Magazine" of this month, along with the other poem which I sent the editor last week. Wishing, for my future benefit, to call the public attention to these pieces, if, in the editor's opinion, they should seem worthy of it, I must request the favour of you to converse with him on this subject. You know the numerous pieces I am in possession of, would put it in my power to support tolerably well any re-

commendation he might bestow on these; and while they would not, I trust, disgrace the pages of his valuable publication, they might serve as my introduction to the literary world, and as a sort of inspiration to some future and more finished attempts. Knowing that you will freely pardon the *quantum* of vanity that suggested these hints,

"I remain, with real regard, &c."

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

Union School, September 17, 1804.

"The second volume of Pinkerton's Geography has at length made its appearance; and I take the freedom of transmitting it, and the atlas, for your amusement. To condemn so extensive a work before a re-perusal, or without taking into consideration all the difficulties that were to be surmounted, is, perhaps, not altogether fair. Yet we almost always form our judgment from the first impressions, and this judgment is very seldom relinquished. You will, therefore, excuse me if I give you some of the impressions made on myself by a cursory perusal.

"Taking it *all in all*, it is certainly the best treatise on the subject hitherto published; though had the author extended his plan, and, instead of two, given us four volumes, it would not frequently have laid him under the necessity of disappointing his reader by the bare mention of things that required greater illustration; and of compressing the natural history of whole regions into half a page. Only *thirty-four* pages allotted to the whole United States! This is brevity with a vengeance. I had indeed expected from the exertions of Dr. Barton, as complete an account of the natural history of this part of the world as his means of information, and the limits of the work, would admit. I have been miserably disappointed; and you will pardon me when I say that his omitting entirely the least reference to your researches in Botany and Zoology, and seeming so solicitous to let us know of his own productions, bespeak a narrowness of mind, and self consequence, which are truly despicable. Every one acquainted with you both, would have con-

fidently trusted that he would rejoice in the opportunity of making the world better acquainted with a man whose works show such a minute and intimate knowledge of these subjects; and from whom he had received so much information. But no—not even the slightest allusion, lest posterity might discover that there existed, at this time, in the United States, a naturalist of information superior to his. My dear sir, I am a Scotchman, and don't love my friends with that cold selfish prudence which I see in some; and if I offend in thus speaking from the fulness of my heart, I know you will forgive me.

"Pinkerton has, indeed, furnished us with many curious particulars unknown, or, at least, unnoticed, by all former geographers; and also with other items long since exploded as fabulous and ridiculous; such is his account of the Upas or poisonous tree; and of children having been lost in some of our American swamps, and of being seen many years afterwards, in a wild savage state! But he very gravely tells his readers that the people of Scotland eat little or no pork from a prejudice which they entertain against swine, the Devil having taken possession of some of them two thousand years ago! What an enlightened people these Scots must be; and what a delicate taste they must be possessed of! Yet I have traversed nearly three-fourths of that country, and mixed much with the common people, and never heard of such an objection before. Had the learned author told his readers that, until late years, Scotland, though abounding in rich pastures, even to its mountain tops, was yet but poorly productive in grain, fruit, &c. the usual food of hogs, and that on this account innumerable herds of sheep, horses and cattle were raised, and but very little pork, he would then have stated the simple facts; and not subjected himself to the laughter of every native of that part of Britain.

"As to the pretended antipathy of the Scots to eels, because they resemble snakes, it is equally ridiculous and improbable; ninety-nine out of a hundred of the natives never saw a snake in their lives. The fact is, it is as usual to eat eels in Scotland, where they can be got, as it is in America; and although I have

frequently heard such objections made to the eating of eels here, where snakes are so common, yet I do not remember to have heard the comparison made in Scotland. I have taken notice of these two observations of his, because they are applied generally to the Scots, making them appear a weak squeamish-stomached set of beings, infected with all the prejudices and antipathies of children.

"These are some of my objections to this work, which, however, in other respects, does honour to the talents, learning, and industry of the compiler."

In the month of October, 1804, Wilson, accompanied with two of his friends, set out on a pedestrian journey to visit the far-famed cataract of Niagara, whereof he had heard much, but which he had never had an opportunity of beholding. The picturesque scenery of that beautiful river, the vastness and sublimity of the cataract, as might be expected, filled the bosom of our traveller with the most rapturous emotions. And he ever after declared, that no language was sufficiently comprehensive to convey an adequate idea of that wonderful curiosity.

On the return of Wilson, he employed his leisure moments in writing a poetical narrative of the journey. This poem, which contains some interesting description, and pleasing imagery, is entitled "THE FORESTERS;" and was gratuitously tendered to the proprietors of the Port Folio, and published in that excellent miscellany, in the years 1809—10.

This expedition was undertaken rather too late in the season, and, consequently, our travellers were subjected to hardships of which they were not aware. Winter overtook them whilst in the Genessee country, in their return by the way of Albany; and they were compelled to trudge, the greater part of the route, through snow midleg deep.

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

Gray's Ferry, December 15th, 1804.

"Though now snug at home, looking back in recollection on the long, circuitous, journey which I have at length finished,

through deep snows, and almost uninhabited forests; over stupendous mountains, and down dangerous rivers: passing over, in a course of thirteen hundred miles, as great a variety of men and modes of living, as the same extent of country can exhibit in any part of the United States—though in this tour I have had every disadvantage of deep roads and rough weather; hurried marches, and many other inconveniences to encounter,—yet so far am I from being satisfied with what I have seen, or discouraged by the fatigues which every traveller must submit to, that I feel more eager than ever to commence some more extensive expedition; where scenes and subjects entirely new, and generally unknown, might reward my curiosity; and where perhaps my humble acquisitions might add something to the stores of knowledge. For all the hazards and privations incident to such an undertaking, I feel confident in my own spirit and resolution. With no family to enchain my affections; no ties but those of friendship; and the most ardent love of my adopted country—with a constitution which hardens amidst fatigues; and a disposition sociable and open, which can find itself at home by an Indian fire in the depth of the woods, as well as in the best apartment of the civilized; I have at present a real design of becoming a traveller. But I am miserably deficient in many acquirements absolutely necessary for such a character. Botany, Mineralogy, and Drawing, I most ardently wish to be instructed in, and with these I should fear nothing. Can I yet make any progress in Botany, sufficient to enable me to be useful, and what would be the most proper way to proceed? I have many leisure moments that should be devoted to this pursuit, provided I could have hopes of succeeding. Your opinion on this subject will confer an additional obligation on your affectionate friend."

It is worthy of remark, that when men of uncommon talents conceive any great scheme, they usually overlook those circumstances of minor importance, which ordinary minds would estimate as first deserving attention. Thus Wilson, with an intellect expanded with information, and still grasping at fur-

ther improvement as a means of distinction, would fain become a traveller, even at the very moment when the sum total of his funds amounted to *seventy-five cents!*

TO MR. WM. DUNCAN.

Gray's Ferry, December 24, 1804.

"You have no doubt looked for this letter long ago, but I wanted to see how matters would finally settle with respect to my school before I wrote; they remain, however, as uncertain as before; and this quarter will do little more than defray my board and firewood. Comfortable intelligence truly, methinks I hear you say; but no matter. * * * *

"I shall begin where you and I left off our story, viz. at Aurora, on the shores of the Cayuga.* The evening of that day, Issac and I lodged at the outlet of Owasco Lake, on the turnpike, seven or eight miles from Cayuga bridge; we waded into the stream, washed our boots and pantaloons, and walked up to a contemptible dram-shop, where, taking possession of one side of the fire, we sat deafened with the noise and hubbub of a parcel of drunk tradesmen. At five next morning we started; it had frozen; and the road was in many places deep and slippery. I insensibly got into a hard step of walking; Isaac kept groaning a rod or so behind, though I carried his gun. * * * We set off again; and we stopped at the outlet of Skaneateles Lake; ate some pork-blubber and bread; and departed. At about two in the afternoon we passed Onondaga Hollow, and lodged in Manlius square, a village of thirty houses, that have risen like mushrooms in two or three years; having walked this day thirty-four miles. On the morning of the 22d we started as usual by five—road rough—and Isaac grunting and lagging behind. This day we were joined by another young traveller, returning home to his father's on the Mohawk; he had a pocket bottle, and made frequent and long applications of it to his lips. The road this day bad, and the snow deeper than before. Passing through Oneida castle, I vi-

* Mr. Duncan remained among his friends at Aurora.

sited every house within three hundred yards of the road, and chatted to the copper-coloured tribe. In the evening we lodged at Lard's tavern, within eleven miles of Utica, the roads deplorably bad, and Isaac and his disconsolate companion groaning at every step behind me, so that, as drummers do in battle, I was frequently obliged to keep before, and sing some lively ditty, to drown the sound of their ohs! and ahs! and O Lords! The road for fifteen or twenty miles was knee deep of mud. We entered Utica at nine the next morning. This place is three times larger than it was four years ago; and from Oneida to Utica is almost an entire continued village. This evening we lodged on the east side of the Mohawk, fifteen miles below Utica, near which I shot a bird of the size of a Mocking-bird, which proves to be one never yet described by naturalists. I have it here in excellent order. From the town called Herkimer we set off through deep mud, and some snow; and about mid-day, between East and West Canada Creeks, I shot three birds of the Jay kind, all of one species, which appears to be undescribed. Mr. Bartram is greatly pleased at the discovery; and I have saved two of them in tolerable condition. Below the Little Falls the road was excessively bad, and Isaac was almost in despair, in spite of all I could do to encourage him. We walked this day twenty-four miles; and early on the 25th started off again through deep mud, till we came within fifteen miles of Schenectady, when a boat coming down the river, Isaac expressed a wish to get on board. I walked six miles afterwards by myself, till it got so dark that I could hardly rescue myself from the mud holes. The next morning I entered Schenectady, but Isaac did not arrive, in the boat, till noon. Here we took the stage-coach for Albany, the roads being excessively bad, and arrived there in the evening. After spending two days in Albany, we departed in a sloop, and reached New York on Saturday, at noon, the first of December. My boots were now reduced to legs and upper leathers; and my pantaloons in a sad plight. Twelve dollars were expended on these two articles. * * * *

On Friday, the 7th December, I reached Gray's Ferry, having walked forty-seven miles that day. I was absent two months on this journey, and I traversed in that time upwards of twelve hundred miles.

"The evening of my arrival I went to L***h's, whose wife had got twins, a boy and a girl. The boy was called after me: this honour took six dollars more from me. After paying for a cord of wood, I was left with only *three quarters* of a dollar."

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

Union School, December, 24, 1804.

"I have perused Dr. Barton's publication,* and return it with many thanks for the agreeable and unexpected treat it has afforded me. The description of the falls of Niagara is, in some places, a just, though faint, delineation of that stupendous cataract. But many interesting particulars are omitted; and much of the writer's reasoning on the improbability of the *wearing away* of the precipice, and consequent recession of the Falls, seems contradicted by every appearance there; and many other assertions are incorrect. Yet on such a subject, every thing, however trifling, seems to attract attention: the reader's imagination supplying him with scenery in abundance, even amidst the feebleness and barrenness of the meanest writer's description.

"After this article, I was most agreeably amused with "Anecdotes of an American crow," written in such a pleasing style of playful humour as I have seldom seen surpassed; and forming a perfect antidote against the spleen; abounding, at the same time, with observations and reflections not unworthy of a philosopher.

"The sketch of your father's life, with the extracts from his letters, I read with much pleasure. They will remain lasting monuments of the worth and respectability of the father, as well as of the filial affection of the son.

* The Philadelphia Medical and Physical Journal, vol. I.

"The description of the Chactaw *Bonepickers* is a picture so horrible, that I think nothing can exceed it. Many other pieces in this work are new and interesting. It cannot fail to promote the knowledge of natural history, and deserves, on this account, every support and encouragement."

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

December 26, 1804.

"I send for your amusement the "Literary Magazine" for September, in which you will find a well written, and, except in a few places, a correct description of the great Falls of Niagara. I yesterday saw a drawing of them, taken in 1768, and observe that many large rocks, that used formerly to appear in the rapids above the Horseshoe falls, are now swept away; and the form of the curve considerably altered, the consequence of its gradual retrogression. I hope this account will entertain you, as I think it by far the most complete I have yet seen."

TO MR. WM. DUNCAN.

Kingsessing, February 20, 1805.

"I received yours of January 1, and wrote immediately; but partly through negligence, and partly through accident, it has not been put into the post office; and I now sit down to give you some additional particulars.

* * * *

"This winter has been entirely lost to me, as well as to yourself. I shall on the twelfth of next month be scarcely able to collect a sufficiency to pay my board, having not more than twenty-seven scholars. Five or six families, who used to send me their children, have been almost in a state of starvation. The rivers Schuylkill and Delaware are still shut, and wagons are passing and repassing at this moment upon the ice.

"The solitary hours of this winter I have employed in completing the poem which I originally intended for a description of your first journey to Ovid. It is now so altered as to bear little resemblance to the original; and I have named it the "*Fo-*

resters." It begins with a description of the Fall or Indian Summer, and relates, minutely, our peregrinations and adventures until our arrival at Catharine Landing, occupying ten hundred and thirty lines. The remainder will occupy nearly as much; and as I shall, if ever I publish it, insert numerous notes, I should be glad, if, while you are on the spot, you would collect every interesting anecdote you can of the country, and of the places which we passed through. Hunting stories, &c., peculiar to the would be acceptable. I should be extremely glad to spend one afternoon with you for the benefit of your criticisms. I lent the poem to Mr. * * * our senator, who seems to think it worth reading; and * * * * has expressed many flattering compliments on my labours; but I dont value either of their opinions so much as I would yours. I have bestowed more pains upon this than I ever did upon any former poem; and if it contain nothing really good, I shall for ever despair of producing any other that will."

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

March 4, 1805.

"My dear friend,

"This day the heart of every republican, of every good man, within the immense limits of our happy country, will leap with joy.

"The re-appointment and continuance of our beloved Jefferson to superintend our national concerns, is one of those distinguished blessings whose beneficent effects extend to posterity; and whose value our hearts may feel, but can never express.

"I congratulate with you, my dear friend, on this happy event. The enlightened philosopher,—the *distinguished naturalist,*—the *first statesman on earth,*—the friend, the ornament of science, is the father of our country, the faithful guardian of our liberties. May the precious fruits of such pre-eminent talents long, long be ours: and the grateful effusions of millions of freemen, at a far distant period, follow their aged and honoured patriot to the peaceful tomb.

"I am at present engaged in drawing the two birds which I brought from the Mohawk; and, if I can finish them to your approbation, I intend to transmit them to our excellent president, as the child of an amiable parent presents to its affectionate father some little token of its esteem."

TO MR. WM. DUNCAN.

Gray's Ferry, March 26, 1805.

"I received your letter of January 1, sometime about the beginning of February; and wrote the same evening very fully; but have heard nothing in return. Col. S. desires me to tell you to be in no uneasiness, nor part with the place to a disadvantage on his account. His son has been with me since January. I told you in my last of the thinness of my school: it produced me the last quarter only twenty-six scholars; and the sum of *fifteen* dollars was all the money I could raise from them at the end of the term. I immediately called the trustees together, and, stating the affair to them, proposed giving up the school. Two of them on the spot offered to subscribe between them one hundred dollars a-year, rather than permit me to go; and it was agreed to call a meeting of the people: the result was honourable to me, for forty-eight scholars were instantly subscribed for; so that the ensuing six months my school will be worth pretty near two hundred dollars. So much for my affairs. * * * *

"I have never had a scrap from Scotland since last summer; but I am much more anxious to hear from you. I hope you have weathered this terrible winter; and that your heart and your limbs are as sound as ever. I also most devoutly wish that matters could be managed so that we could be together. This farm must either be sold, or let; it must not for ever be a great gulf between us. I have spent most of my leisure hours this winter in writing the "Foresters," a poem descriptive of our journey. I have brought it up only to my shooting expedition at the head of the Seneca Lake; and it amounts already to twelve hundred lines. I hope that when you and I meet, it

will afford you more pleasure than any of my productions has ever done. The two nondescript birds* which I killed on the Mohawk, attracted the notice of several naturalists about Philadelphia. On the fourth of March I set to work upon a large sheet of fine drawing paper, and in ten days I finished two faithful drawings of them, far superior to any that I had done before. In the back ground I represented a view of the Falls of Niagara, with the woods wrought in as finely as I possibly could do. Mr. Lawson was highly pleased with it, and Mr. Bartram was even more so. I then wrote a letter to that *best of men*, Mr. Jefferson, which Mr. Bartram enclosed in one of his, (both of which, at least copies of them, I shall show you when we meet,) and sent off the whole, carefully rolled up, by the mail, on the 20th inst. to Monticello, in Virginia. The Jay I presented to Mr. Peale, at his request; and it is now in the Museum. I have done but few other drawings, being so intent on the poem. I hope if you find any curious birds, you will attempt to preserve them, or at least their skins; if a small bird be carefully skinned, it can easily be set up at any time. I still intend to complete my collection of drawings; but the last will be by far the best. * * * *

"The poor of Philadelphia have suffered extremely this winter, the river having been frozen up for more than two months, yet the ice went away without doing any damage. I must again request that you and Alexander would collect the skins of as many birds as you have not seen here. * * * * The process of skinning the birds may amuse you; and your collections will be exceedingly agreeable to me. In the mean time never lose sight of getting rid of the troublesome farm, if it can be done with advantage; so that we may once more be together: and write to me frequently.

"I have now nothing more to say, but to give my affectionate compliments to your mother and all the family; and to wish

* One of these birds was the Canada Jay, (Am. Orn. vol. 3, p. 33. ed. 1st.) which was known to naturalists.

you every comfort that the state of society you are in can afford. With the great volume of Nature before you, you can never, while in health, be without amusement. Keep a diary of every thing you meet with that is curious. Look out, now and then, for natural curiosities as you traverse your farm; and remember me as you wander through your woody solitudes."

FROM MR. JEFFERSON.

Monticello, April 7, 1805.

"Sir,

"I received here yesterday your favour of March 18, with the elegant drawings of the new birds you found on your tour to Niagara, for which I pray you to accept my thanks. The Jay is quite unknown to me. From my observations while in Europe, on the birds and quadrupeds of that quarter, I am of opinion there is not in our continent a single bird or quadruped which is not sufficiently unlike all the members of its family there to be considered as specifically different; on this general observation I conclude with confidence that your Jay is not a European bird.

"The first bird on the same sheet I judge to be a Muscicapa from its bill, as well as from the following circumstance. Two or three days before my arrival here a neighbour killed a bird, unknown to him, and never before seen here, as far as he could learn; it was brought to me soon after I arrived; but in the dusk of the evening, and so putrid that it could not be approached but with disgust. But I retain a sufficiently exact idea of its form and colours to be satisfied it is the same with yours. The only difference I find in yours is that the white on the back is not so pure, and that the one I saw had a little of a crest. Your figure, compared with the white bellied *Gobe-mouche*, 8 Buff. 342. Pl. enlum. 566, shows a near relation. Buffon's is dark on the back.

"As you are curious in birds, there is one well worthy your attention, to be found, or rather heard, in every part of America, and yet scarcely ever to be seen; it is in all the forests,

from spring to fall, and never but on the tops of the tallest trees, from which it perpetually serenades us with some of the sweetest notes, and as clear as those of the nightingale. I have followed it for miles without ever, but once, getting a good view of it. It is of the size and make of the Mocking-bird, lightly thrush-coloured on the back, and a grayish-white on the breast and belly. Mr. Randolph, my son-in-law, was in possession of one which had been shot by a neighbour; he pronounces this also a Muscicapa, and I think it much resembling the *Moucherolle de la Martinique*, 8 Buffon, 374, Pl. enlum. 568. As it abounds in all the neighbourhood of Philadelphia, you may perhaps by patience and perseverance (of which much will be requisite) get a sight, if not a possession of it. I have for twenty years interested the young sportsmen of my neighbourhood to shoot me one; but as yet without success. Accept my salutations and assurances of respect.

TH. JEFFERSON.

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

April 18th, 1805.

"By Mr. Jefferson's condescending and very intelligent letter to me, which I enclose for your perusal, it appears that our Jay is an entirely new, or rather undescribed bird, which met me on the banks of the Mohawk, to do me the honour of ushering him to the world. This duty I have conscientiously discharged, by introducing him to two naturalists: the one endeared to me, and every lover of science, by the benevolence of his heart; and the other ordained by Heaven to move in a distinguished orbit—an honour to the human race—the *patron of science*, and best hope of republicans! I say, that no bird, since Noah's days, could boast of such distinguished honour.

"Mr. Jefferson speaks of a very strange bird; please let me know what it is; I shall be on the look out, and he must be a sly fellow if he escape me. I shall watch his motions, and the sound of his *serenade*, pretty closely, to be able to transmit to

our worthy president a faithful sketch of a bird, which he has been so long curious to possess."

TO MR. WM. DUNCAN.

Gray's Ferry, May 8th, 1805.

"I am glad to understand that the plantation is increasing so fast in value, but more so that it is not either sold or otherwise disposed of at the low rate at which we would have once thrown it away; yet it is the perpetual cause of separating us, which I am very sorry for. I am living a mere hermit, not spending one farthing, to see if I possibly can reimburse ****, who I can see is not so courteous and affable as formerly. I hope to be able to pay him one hundred dollars, with interest, next October, and the remainder in the spring; we shall then be clear of the world; and I don't care how many privations I suffer to effect that. I associate with nobody; spend my leisure hours in drawing, wandering through the woods, or playing upon the violin.

"I informed you in my last of sending Mr. Jefferson drawings of the Falls, and some birds, which I found on the Mohawk, and which it seems have never been taken notice of by any naturalist. He returned me a very kind and agreeable letter, from Monticello, expressing many obligations for the drawings, which he was highly pleased with; and describing to me a bird, which he is very desirous of possessing, having interested the young sportsmen of his neighbourhood, he says, these twenty years, to shoot him one, without success. It is of the size and make of the Mocking-bird, lightly thrush-coloured on the back, and grayish-white on the breast; is never heard but from the tops of the tallest trees, whence it continually serenades us with some of the sweetest notes, and as clear as those of the nightingale. Mr. Bartram can give no account of this bird, except it be the Wood Robin, which I don't think it is; for Mr. Jefferson says, "*it is scarcely ever to be seen;*" and "I have followed it for miles without ever, but once, getting a

good view of it."* I have been on the look-out ever since, but in vain. If you can hear of such a bird, let me know. I wish you also to look for the new bird which I discovered. It is of the size of the Blue Jay; and is of that genus—of a dull lead colour on the back—the forehead white—black on the back of the neck—the breast and belly a dirty, or brownish white, with a white ring round its neck—its legs and bill exactly the Jay's. Pray inquire respecting it, and any other new bird. If they could be conveyed to me, drawings of them, presented to the same dignified character, might open the road to a better acquaintance, and something better might follow. Alexander and you, will, I hope, be on the look-out with the gun, and kill every bird that comes in your way; and keep written descriptions, or the skins, if possible, of those you don't know. Were I able, I would undertake another journey up to you through the woods, while the birds are abundant; and nothing would give me so much pleasure as to make another extensive tour with you for this purpose; for I am persuaded that there are many species yet undescribed; and Mr. Jefferson is anxious to replenish his museum with the rare productions of his country."

TO MR. WM. DUNCAN.

Gray's Ferry, May 31, 1805.

"Yesterday evening I was finishing a Hanging-bird in my silent mansion, musing upon a certain affair, when Mr. L. pop-

* After many inquiries, and an unwearied research, it turned out that this invisible musician was no other than the Wood Robin, a bird which, if sought for in those places which it affects, may be seen every hour of the day. Its favourite haunts Wilson has beautifully described in its history; but so far from being found always "on the tops of the tallest trees," it is seldom seen in such places, but seems to prefer the horizontal branches, at no great height, especially when piping its exquisitely melodious song. One of its names, the Ground Robin, is derived from the circumstance of its being frequently seen upon the ground. Its song consists of several distinct parts, at the conclusion of each of which it commonly flies a few feet, and rests just long enough to continue the strain. A person unacquainted with these particulars, would suppose that he heard several birds, in various quarters, responding to each other, and would find it hard to believe that the whole was the performance of one.

ped his head in at the window, with a letter. I instantly laid down my pencil, and enjoyed a social *crack* with my distant friend; and was heartily and truly pleased with the upshot. In every thing relative to this land business, you have acted amidst difficulties and discouragements with prudence and discretion. In refusing to engage with * * * * * * you acted well; and I doubt not but you will be equally circumspect in making a transfer of the property, so that the Yankee will not be able, even if he were willing, to take you in. More than half of the roguery of one-half of mankind is owing to the simplicity of the other half. You have my hearty concurrence in the whole affair, for I impatiently wish you beside me, not only to enjoy your society and friendship, but to open to you the book of knowledge, and enable you, in your turn, to teach it to others. In plain language, I wish you to prosecute your studies with me a few months; a school will soon be found, and you can then pursue them without expense, and I trust with pleasure. The business has indeed its cares, but affords leisure for many amusements; and is decent and reputable when properly discharged. I am living in solitude; spending nothing; diligently attending to the duties of the day; and filling up every leisure moment with drawing and music. I have bought no clothes, nor shall I, this summer; therefore if you settle the matter with * * * as you have agreed, we can discharge our obligations to * * * *, and be in a state to go on with your studies for at least six months. Mr. * * * * was here yesterday, and expressed many acknowledgments for the rapid progress * * * * * is making, for indeed I have exerted myself to pay my obligations to the father by my attentions to the son.

"I wrote you respecting the letter I had from the president. I have never been able to get a sight of the bird he mentions. I hope you will not neglect to bring your gun with you, and look out as you come along.

"I have done no more to the "*Foresters.*" The journey is brought up to my expedition upon the Seneca Lake. I am much in want of notes of the first settlement, and present state,

of the different places that we passed, as we went up the Susquehannah; every thing of this kind, with hunting anecdotes, &c. I wish you to collect in your way down. The remainder of the poem will, I hope, be superior to what is already written, the scenery and incidents being more interesting; and will extend to at least another fifteen hundred lines, which will make in all about three thousand.* The notes will swell it to a tolerable size.

"The '*Rural Walk*,' which I published last summer in the Literary Magazine, has been lately republished in the Port Folio,† with many commendations on its beauties. The '*Solitary Tutor*' met with much approbation. But I reserve my best efforts for the remainder of the 'Foresters.' * *

"I have not mentioned any thing of the sale of the land, nor shall I until the business is finally concluded. I shall expect to hear from you at least twice yet before you arrive; and I hope you will make no unnecessary delay in returning. As you cut a pretty ragged appearance at present, and want something to laugh at, suppose you set your muse to work upon your tatterdemalian dishabille. The former neatness of your garb, contrasted with its present squalidness, would make a capital subject for a song, not forgetting the causes. But you are in the dress of the people you live among: you are therefore in character. B. had a hat on when I was up in your quarter, the rim of which had been eaten off, close to his head, by the rats, or, perhaps, cut off to make soles to his shoes; yet it was so common as to escape observation. I saw another fellow, too, at the tavern, who had pieces cut out of his *behind*, like a swallow's tail." * * * *

The spring of the year 1805 gave to the enraptured view of our naturalist his interesting feathered acquaintance. He listened to their artless songs; he noted their habitudes; he sketch-

* This poem, as published in the Port Folio, contains two thousand two hundred and eighteen lines. It is illustrated with four plates, two of which were engraved by George Cooke of London.

† For April 27, 1805.

ed their portraits. And, after having passed a few months varied with this charming occupation, he again writes to the respected inhabitant of the Botanic Garden:

Union School, July 2, 1805.

"I dare say you will smile at my presumption, when I tell you that I have seriously begun to make a collection of drawings of the birds to be found in Pennsylvania, or that occasionally pass through it: twenty-eight, as a beginning, I send for your opinion. They are, I hope, inferior to what I shall produce, though as close copies of the originals as I could make. One or two of these I cannot find either in your nomenclature, or among the seven volumes of Edwards. I have never been able to find the bird Mr. Jefferson speaks of, and begin to think that it must be the Wood Robin, though it seems strange that he should represent it as so hard to be seen. Any hint for promoting my plan, or enabling me to execute better, I will receive from you with much pleasure. I have resigned every other amusement, except reading and fiddling, for this design, which I shall not give up without making a fair trial.

"Criticise these, my dear friend, without fear of offending me—this will instruct, but not discourage me.—For there is not among all our naturalists one who knows so well what they are, and how they ought to be represented. In the mean time accept of my best wishes for your happiness—wishes as sincere as ever one human being breathed for another. To your advice and encouraging encomiums I am indebted for these few specimens, and for all that will follow. *They may yet tell posterity that I was honoured with your friendship, and that to your inspiration they owe their existence.*"

The plates illustrative of the natural history of Edwards were etched by the author himself. Wilson had examined them very attentively, and felt assured that, with a little instruction in the art of etching, he could produce more accurate delineations; and would be enabled, by his superior knowledge of colouring, to

finish the figures for his contemplated work, in a style not inferior to his spirited and beautiful drawings from nature.

Mr. Lawson was of course consulted on this occasion, and cheerfully contributed his advice and assistance in the novel and difficult enterprise. Wilson procured the copper; and, the former having laid the varnish, and furnished the necessary tools, he eagerly commenced the important operation, on the successful termination of which his happiness seemed to depend.

Let the reader pause and reflect on the extravagance of that enthusiasm, which could lead a person to imagine, that, without any knowledge of an art derived from experience, he could at once produce that effect, which is the result only of years of trial and diligence.

The next day after Wilson had parted from his preceptor, the latter, to use his own words, was surprised to behold him *bouncing* into his room, crying out—"*I have finished my plate! let us bite it in with the aquafortis at once, for I must have a proof before I leave town!** Lawson burst into laughter at the ludicrous appearance of his friend animated with impetuous zeal; and to humour him granted his request. A proof was taken, but fell far short of Wilson's expectations, or of his ideas of correctness. However, he lost no time in conferring with Mr. Bartram, to whom he wrote as follows:

"*Nov.* 29, 1805.

"I have been amusing myself this some time in attempting to etch; and now send you a proof-sheet of my first performance in this way. Be so good as communicate to me your own corrections, and those of your young friend and pupil. I will re-

* For the information of those of our readers, who are unacquainted with the process of etching, we subjoin the following explanatory note:—

Upon the polished copper-plate, a coat of varnish, of a particular composition, is thinly spread. The design is then traced, and cut through to the copper, with an instrument termed a point. A bank of wax is now raised around the plate, and aquafortis poured into the enclosure, which acid eats into the copper only where the point had past. The length of time requisite for the successful action of the aquafortis, must be determined by the judgment of the operator.

ceive them as a very kind and particular favour. The drawings which I also send, that you may compare them together, were done from birds in full plumage, and in the best order. My next attempt in etching will perhaps be better, every thing being new to me in this. I will send you the first impression I receive after I finish the plate."

In a short time another plate was prepared and completed with the despatch of the former. In fulfilment of his promise to his friend, he transmits a proof, accompanied with the following note:

"Mr. Wilson's affectionate compliments to Mr Bartram; and sends for his amusement and correction another proof of his Birds of the United States. The colouring being chiefly done last night, must soften criticism a little. Will be thankful for my friend's advice and correction.

"Mr. Wilson wishes his beloved friend a happy new-year, and every blessing."

Saturday, January 4th, 1806.

These essays in etching,* though creditable to Wilson's ingenuity and perseverance, yet by no means afforded satisfaction. He became now convinced that the *point* alone was not sufficient to produce the intended effect; and that nothing short of the accuracy of the *graver* would in any wise correspond to his ideas of excellence. But in the art of engraving he had never been instructed; and he could not command means sufficient to cover the expense of the plates even of a single volume, on the magnificent plan which his comprehensive mind had delineated. A proposition was now made to Mr. Lawson to engage in the work, on a joint concern. But there were several objections which this gentleman urged, sufficiently weighty, in his opinion, to warrant his non-acceptance of the offer. Wilson, finding his schemes thus baffled, declared, with

* The two first plates of the Ornithology are those which the author etched himself. The writer of this sketch has in his possession a proof of the first one, which he preserves as a relic of no small value. It is inscribed with the author's name.

solemn emphasis, his resolution of proceeding alone in the publication, if it should even cost him his life. "*I shall at least leave,*" continued he, "*a small beacon to point out where I perished..*"

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

Jan. 27, 1806.

"Being in town on Saturday, I took the opportunity of calling on Mr. ———, who, in 1804, went down the Ohio, with one companion, in a small bateau. They sometimes proceeded seventy miles in twenty-four hours, going often night and day. They had an awning; and generally slept on board the boat, without ever catching cold, or any inconvenience by moschetoes, except when in the neighbourhood of swamps. He describes the country as exceedingly beautiful. The object of their journey being trade, they had neither gun nor fishing-tackle; and paid little or no attention to natural objects. He says the navigation of a bateau is perfectly easy, and attended with no hazard whatever. One solitary adventurer passed them in a small boat, going from Wheeling to New Orleans.

"If, my dear friend, we should be so happy as to go together, what would you think of laying our design before Mr. Jefferson, with a view to procure his advice, and recommendation to influential characters in the route? Could we procure his approbation and patronage, they would secure our success. Perhaps he might suggest some improvements in our plan. Had we a good companion, intimately acquainted with mineralogy, who would submit to our economical plan of proceeding, it would certainly enhance the value of the expedition. However, this I have no hopes of.

"I see, by the newspapers, that Mr. Jefferson designs to employ persons to explore the shores of the Mississippi the ensuing summer: surely our exertions would promote his wishes. I write these particulars that you may give them the consideration they deserve; and will call upon you to deliberate further on the affair.

To the Same.

February 3, 1806.

"The enclosed sketch of a letter is submitted for your opinion, and, if approved, I must request of you the favour to enclose it in one of your own to Mr. Jefferson. You see I am serious in my design of traversing our southern wildernesses. Disappointed in your company, I have no hopes in another's that would add any value to the Ohio tour. I am therefore driven to this expedient, and I hope it will succeed. Please to let me hear your sentiments on this affair to-morrow morning; and oblige yours, &c."

To the Same.

February 5, 1806.

"I am infinitely obliged to you, my dear friend, for your favourable opinion of me, transmitted to the president. Should an engagement be the consequence, I will merit the character which you have given of me, or perish in the endeavour to deserve it. Accept my assurances of perpetual affection and esteem.

"The letters go off to-morrow."

It will be perceived, by the foregoing letters, that the President of the United States had it in contemplation to despatch men of science, for the purpose of exploring the country of the Mississippi. Wilson now conceived that a favourable opportunity would be afforded him of gratifying a desire, which he had long indulged, of visiting those regions, which he was convinced were rich in the various objects of science; and, particularly, where subjects, new and interesting, might be collected for his embryo work on the Ornithology of our country. He expressed his wishes to Mr. Bartram, who approved of them; and the latter cheerfully wrote to his correspondent, Mr. Jefferson, stating Wilson's character and acquirements; and recommending him as one highly qualified to be employed in that important national enterprise. This introductory letter, endited in the most respectful terms, was accompanied with

an application from Wilson himself, which, as a faithful biographer of my friend, I here think proper to insert entire:—

"TO HIS EXCELLENCY THOMAS JEFFERSON,
"President of the United States.

"Sir,

"Having been engaged, these several years, in collecting materials, and furnishing drawings from nature, with the design of publishing a new Ornithology of the United States of America, so deficient in the works of Catesby, Edwards, and other Europeans, I have traversed the greater part of our northern and eastern districts; and have collected many birds undescribed by these naturalists. Upwards of one hundred drawings are completed; and two plates in folio already engraved. But as many beautiful tribes frequent the Ohio, and the extensive country through which it passes, that probably never visit the Atlantic states; and as faithful representations of these can be taken only from living nature, or from birds newly killed; I had planned an expedition down that river, from Pittsburg to the Mississippi, thence to New Orleans, and to continue my researches by land in return to Philadelphia. I had engaged as a companion and assistant Mr. William Bartram of this place, whose knowledge of Botany, as well as Zoology, would have enabled me to make the best of the voyage, and to collect many new specimens in both those departments. Sketches of these were to have been taken on the spot; and the subjects put in a state of preservation to finish our drawings from, as time would permit. We intended to set out from Pittsburg about the beginning of May; and expected to reach New Orleans in September.

"But my venerable friend, Mr. Bartram, taking into more serious consideration his advanced age, being near seventy, and the weakness of his eye-sight; and apprehensive of his inability to encounter the fatigues and deprivations unavoidable in so extensive a tour; having, to my extreme regret, and the real loss of science, been induced to decline the journey; I had reluctantly abandoned the enterprise, and all hopes of accom-

plishing my purpose; till hearing that your excellency had it in contemplation to send travellers this ensuing summer up the Red River, the Arkansaw, and other tributary streams of the Mississippi; and believing that my services might be of advantage to some of these parties, in promoting your excellency's design; while the best opportunities would be afforded me of procuring subjects for the work which I have so much at heart; under these impressions I beg leave to offer myself for any of these expeditions; and can be ready at a short notice to attend your excellency's orders.

"Accustomed to the hardships of travelling, without a family, and an enthusiast in the pursuit of Natural History, I will devote my whole powers to merit your excellency's approbation; and ardently wish for an opportunity of testifying the sincerity of my professions, and the deep veneration with which I have the honour to be,

"Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

ALEX. WILSON."*

Kingsess, Feb. 6, 1806.

Mr. Jefferson had in his port-folio decisive proofs of Wilson's talents as an ornithologist, the latter having some time before, as the reader will have observed, transmitted to his excellency some elegant drawings of birds, accompanied with descriptions. Yet with these evidences before him, backed with the recommendation of a discerning and experienced naturalist, Mr. Jefferson was either so scandalized at the informal application of our ornithologist, or so occupied in the great concerns of his exalted station, that no answer was returned to the overture; and the cause of the supposed, contemptuous neglect, neither Wilson nor Bartram could ever ascertain.

Whatever might have been the views of the president, who unquestionably bore an effective part in scheming and encourag-

* Wilson was particularly anxious to accompany Pike, who commenced his journey from the cantonment on the Missouri, for the sources of the Arkansaw, &c. on the 15th July, 1806.

ing the expeditions commanded by Lewis and Clark, and Pike, there can be but one opinion on the insufficiency of that plan of discovery which does not embrace the co-operation of men of letters and science: those whose knowledge will teach them to select what is valuable, and whose learning will enable them to digest it for the advantage of others. We would not draw an invidious comparison between the expeditions above-mentioned, and those under the command of Major Long; but we will rest in the hope that, as the government *now* appears to be sensible of the beneficial effects resulting from a liberal and enlightened policy, it will continue to foster that spirit of enterprise which distinguishes some of our citizens; and which, if properly directed, will redound to the honour and glory of our country.

TO MR. WILLIAM DUNCAN.

Gray's Ferry, Feb. 26, 1806.

"Notwithstanding the great esteem I have for your judgment, in preference, many times, to my own, yet I believe we are both wrong in the proposed affair of Saturday week. I have not the smallest ambition of being considered an orator; and would it not, by some, be construed into vanity, or something worse, for me to go all the way from this place to deliver a political lecture at Milestown? Politics has begot me so many enemies, both in the old and new world, and has done me so little good, that I begin to think the less you and I harangue on that subject the better. I do not say this from any doubt I have of being able to say something on the subject, but much question the policy and prudence of it. If you and I attend punctually to the duties of our profession, and make our business our pleasure; and the improvement of our pupils, with their good government, our chief aim; honour, and respectability, and success will assuredly attend us, even if we never open our lips on politics.

"These have been some of my reflections since we parted. I hope you will weigh them in your own mind, and acquiesce

in my resolution of not interfering in the debate on Saturday, as we talked of. At the same time I am really pleased to see the improvement the practice has produced in you; and would by no means wish to dissuade you from amusing and exercising your mind in this manner; because I know that your moderation in sentiment and conduct will always preserve you from ill will on any of these scores. But as it could add nothing to my fame, and as they have all heard me, often enough, on different subjects, about Milestown; and as it would raise no new friends to you, but might open old sores in some of your present friends, I hope you will agree with me that it will be prudent to decline the affair. And as you have never heard me deliver any of my own compositions in this way, I will commit a speech to memory which I delivered at Milestown, in the winter of 1800, and pronounce it to you when we are by ourselves in the woods, *where we can offend nobody.*

"I have heard nothing from Washington yet; and I begin to think that either Mr. Jefferson expects a brush with the Spaniards, or has not received our letters; otherwise he would never act so *unpolitely* to one for whom he has so much esteem as for Mr. Bartram. *No hurry of business could excuse it.* But if affairs are not likely to be settled with Spain, very probably the design of sending parties through Louisiana will be suspended. Indeed I begin to think that if I should not be engaged by Mr. Jefferson, a journey by myself, and at my own expense, at a time, too, when we are just getting our heads above water, as one may say, would not be altogether good policy. Perhaps in another year we might be able, without so much injury, to make a tour together, through part of the south-west countries, which would double all the pleasures of the journey to me. I will proceed in the affair as you may think best, notwithstanding my eager wishes, and the disagreeableness of my present situation. I write this letter in the schoolhouse—past ten at night—L.'s folks all gone to roost—the flying squirrels rattling in the loft above me, and the cats squalling in the cellar below. Wishing you a continuation of that success in teaching, which

has already done you so much credit, I bid you for the present good-night."

We now approach that era of Wilson's life, in which we behold him emerging from the vale of obscurity, and attaining that enviable distinction, in the republic of science and letters, which it is the lot of but few to enjoy.

Mr. Samuel F. Bradford, bookseller, of Philadelphia, being about to publish an edition of Rees's New Cyclopædia, Wilson was introduced to him as one qualified to superintend the work; and was engaged, at a liberal salary, as assistant editor. The articles of agreement are dated the 20th of April, 1806.

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

Philadelphia, April 22d, 1806.

"My dear friend,

"I take the liberty of informing you that having been importuned to engage as assistant editor of that comprehensive and voluminous work, Rees's New Cyclopædia, now publishing here, and a generous salary offered me, I have now accepted of the same, and will commence my new avocation on Monday next.

"This engagement will, I hope, enable me, in more ways than one, to proceed in my intended Ornithology, to which all my leisure moments will be devoted. In the mean time I anticipate, with diffidence, the laborious, and very responsible, situation I am soon to be placed in, requiring a much more general fund of scientific knowledge, and stronger powers of mind, than I am possessed of; but all these objections have been overruled, and I am engaged, in conjunction with Mr. S. F. Bradford, to conduct the publication. In this pursuit I will often solicit your advice, and be happy to communicate your observations to posterity. Shut up from the sweet scenes of rural nature, so dear to my soul, conceive to yourself the pleasures I shall enjoy in sometimes paying a visit to your charming Retreat, and you cannot doubt of frequently seeing your very sincere friend."

Not long after his engagement, he unfolded his mind to Mr. Bradford on the subject of his projected Ornithology; and exhibited such evidence of his talents for a work of that nature, that the latter promptly agreed to become the publisher of it, and to furnish the requisite funds; and now, for the first time, Wilson found those obstructions removed, which had opposed his favourite enterprise.

TO MR. WILSON AT THE FALLS OF NIAGARA.

Philadelphia, July 8th, 1806.

"Dear Sir,

"This will be handed to you by Mr. Michaux, a gentleman of an amiable character, and a distinguished naturalist, who is pursuing his botanical researches through North America, and intends visiting the Cataract of Niagara. The kindness I received from your family in 1804 makes me desirous that my friend, Mr. Michaux, should reside with you during his stay at Niagara; and any attention paid to him will be considered as done to myself, and suitable acknowledgments made in person by me on my arrival at Niagara, which I expect will be early next spring.

"You will be so good as give Mr. Michaux information respecting the late rupture of the rock at the falls, of the burning spring above, and point out to him the place of descent to the rapids below, with any other information respecting the wonderful scenery around you.

"In the short stay I made, and the unfavourable weather I experienced, I was prevented from finishing my intended sketch equal to my wishes; but I design to spend several weeks with you, and not only take correct drawings, but particular descriptions of every thing relating to that stupendous Cataract, and to publish a more complete and satisfactory account, and a better representation of it, than has been yet done in the United States. *

* Wilson's subsequent engagements prevented his return to the Falls, in conformity with his wishes; but his sketches were completed by an artist, en-

"I had a rough journey home through the Genessee country, which was covered with snow to the depth of fifteen inches, and continued so all the way to Albany. If you know of any gentlemen in your neighbourhood acquainted with botany, be so good as introduce Mr. Michaux to them."

TO MR. WM. DUNCAN.

Philadelphia, April 8, 1807.

"Enclosed is a proof-sheet of our prospectus; as soon as the impressions are thrown off on fine paper, I will transmit one for Mr. L. This afternoon Mr. Lawson is to have one of the plates completely finished; and I am going to set the copper-plate printer at work to print each bird in its natural colours, which will be a great advantage in colouring, as the black ink will not then stain the fine tints. We mean to bind in the prospectus at the end of the next half volume, for which purpose twenty-five hundred copies are to be thrown off; and an agent will be appointed in every town in the Union. The prospectus will also be printed in all the newspapers; and every thing done to promote the undertaking.

"I hope you have made a beginning, and have already a collection of heads, bills and claws, delineated. If this work should go on, it will be a five years affair; and may open the way to something more extensive; for which reason I am anxious to have you with me to share the harvest.

"I started this morning, by peep of day, with my gun, for the purpose of shooting a nuthatch. After jumping a hundred fences, and getting over the ancles in mud, (for I had put on my shoes for lightness,) I found myself almost at the junction of the Schuylkill and Delaware, without success, there being hardly half an acre of woodland in the whole *neck;* and the nuthatch generally frequents large-timbered woods. I returned home at eight o'clock, after getting completely wet, and in a

graved by George Cooke of London, and illustrate his poem of the "Foresters," which was published in the Port Folio. These well-engraved views, which are two in number, convey a good idea of the famous Cataract; the "Great Pitch," in particular, is admirably represented.

profuse perspiration, which, contrary to the maxims of the doctors, has done me a great deal of good; and I intend to repeat the dose; except that I shall leave out the ingredient of the wet feet, if otherwise convenient. Were I to prescribe such a remedy to Lawson, he would be ready to think me mad. Moderate, nay even pretty severe exercise, is the best medicine in the world for sedentary people, and ought not to be neglected on any account."

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

Philadelphia, April 29, 1807.

"My dear sir,

"The receipt of yours of the 11th inst. in which you approve of my intended publication of American Ornithology, gave me much satisfaction; and your promise of befriending me in the arduous attempt commands my unfeigned gratitude. From the opportunities I have lately had, of examining into the works of Americans, who have treated of this part of our natural history, I am satisfied that none of them have bestowed such minute attention on the subject as you yourself have done. Indeed they have done little more than copied your nomenclature and observations, and referred to your authority. To have you, therefore, to consult with in the course of this great publication I consider a most happy and even auspicious circumstance; and I hope you will, on all occasions, be a rigid censor, and kind monitor, whenever you find me deviating from the beauties of nature, or the truth of description.

"The more I read and reflect upon the subject, the more dissatisfied I am with the *specific* names which have been used by almost every writer. A name should, if possible, be expressive of some peculiarity in colour, conformation, or habit; if it will equally apply to two different species, it is certainly an improper one. Is *migratorius* an epithet peculiarly applicable to the robin? Is it not equally so to almost every species of *turdus* we have? *Europea* has been applied by Pennant to our large *sitta* or nuthatch, which is certainly a different species from the

European, the latter being destitute of the black head, neck and shoulders of ours. Latham calls it *carolinensis*, but it is as much an inhabitant of Pennsylvania and New York as Carolina. The small red-bellied *sitta* is called *canadensis* by Latham, a name equally objectionable with the other. Turdus *minor* seems also improper; in short I consider this part of the business as peculiarly perplexing; and I beg to have your opinion on the matter, particularly with respect to the birds I have mentioned, whether I shall hazard a new nomenclature, or, by copying, sanction what I do not approve of.

"I hope you are in good health, enjoying in your little Paradise the advances of spring, shedding leaves, buds and blossoms, around her; and bringing in her train choirs of the sweetest songsters that earth can boast of; while every zephyr that plays around you breathes fragrance. Ah! how different my situation in this delightful season, immured among musty books, and compelled to forego the harmony of the woods for the everlasting din of the city; the very face of the blessed heavens involved in soot, and interrupted by walls and chimney tops. But if I don't lanch out into the woods and fields oftener than I have done these twelvemonths, may I be transformed into a street musician." (The remainder of the MS. defaced.)

All things being happily arranged, Wilson applied himself to his varied and extensive duties with a diligence which scarcely admitted repose; until finding his health much impaired thereby, he was induced to seek the benefits of relaxation, in a pedestrian journey through a part of Pennsylvania; which afforded him a favourable opportunity of procuring specimens of birds; and some additional information relating to them, of which he was very desirous to be possessed. This excursion was made in the month of August, 1807; and on his return he engaged in his avocations with renewed ardour; devoting every moment, which could be spared from his editorial duties, to his great work.

At length in the month of September, 1808, the first volume of the "American Ornithology" made its appearance. From

the date of the arrangement with the publisher, a prospectus had been issued, wherein the nature and intended execution of the work were specified; but yet no one appeared to entertain an adequate idea of the elegant treat which was about to be afforded to the lovers of the arts, and of useful literature. And when the volume was presented to the public, their delight was only equalled by their astonishment, that our country, as yet in its infancy, should produce an original work in science, that could vie, in its essentials, with the proudest productions, of a similar nature, of the European world.

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

Philadelphia, Sept. 21, 1808.

"In a few minutes I set out for the Eastern States, through Boston to Maine, and back through the state of Vermont, in search of birds and subscribers. I regret that I have not been able to spend an evening with you before my departure. But I shall have a better stock of adventures to relate after my return.

"I send a copy of the prospectus, and my best wishes for the happiness of the whole family. I leave my horse behind, and go by the stage coach, as being the least troublesome. I hope to make some discoveries in my tour, the least agreeable of which will, I fear, be—that I have bestowed a great deal of labour and expense to little purpose. But all these things will not prevent me from enjoying, as I pass along, the glorious face of Nature, and her admirable productions, while I have eyes to see, and taste and judgment to appreciate them."

After despatching the above note, Wilson set out on a journey to the eastward, to exhibit his book, and procure subscribers. He travelled as far as the District of Maine; and returned through Vermont, by the way of Albany, to Philadelphia. From a letter to a friend, dated Boston, October 10th, 1808, we have made the following extract:

"I have purposely avoided saying any thing either good or bad, on the encouragement I have met with. I shall only say,

that among the many thousands who have examined my book, and among these were men of the first character for taste and literature, I have heard nothing but expressions of the highest admiration and esteem. If I have been mistaken in publishing a work too good for the country, it is a fault not likely to be soon repeated, and will pretty severely correct itself. But whatever may be the result of these matters, I shall not sit down with folded hands, whilst any thing can be done to carry my point: since God helps them who help themselves. I am fixing correspondents in every corner of these northern regions, like so many pickets and outposts, so that scarcely a *wren* or *tit* shall be able to pass along, from York to Canada, but I shall get intelligence of it."

TO MR. D. H. MILLER.

Boston, October 12, 1808.

"Dear Sir,

"I arrived here on Sunday last, after various adventures, the particulars of which, as well as the observations I have had leisure to make upon the passing scenery around me, I shall endeavour, as far as possible, to compress into this letter, for your own satisfaction, and that of my friends who may be interested for my welfare. My company in the stage coach to New York were all unknown to me, except Col. S., who was on his route to Fort Oswego, on Lake Ontario, to take command of the troops intended to be stationed on that part of the frontier, to prevent evasions of the embargo law. The sociable disposition and affability of the Colonel made this part of the journey pass very agreeably, for both being fond of walking, whenever the driver stopped to water, or drink grog, which was generally every six or eight miles, we set out on foot, and sometimes got on several miles before the coach overhauled us. By this method we enjoyed our ride, and with some little saving of horseflesh, which I know you will approve of. At Princeton I bade my fellow travellers good by, as I had to wait upon the reverend doctors of the college. I took my book under my arm, put se-

veral copies of the prospectus into my pocket, and walked up to this spacious sanctuary of literature. I could amuse you with some of my reflections on this occasion, but room will not permit. Dr. Smith, the president, and Dr. M'Lean, professor of Natural History, were the only two I found at home. The latter invited me to tea, and both were much pleased and surprised with the appearance of the work. I expected to receive some valuable information from M'Lean, on the ornithology of the country, but I soon found, to my astonishment, that he scarcely knew a *sparrow* from a *woodpecker*. At his particular request, I left a specimen of the plates with him; and from what passed between us, I have hopes that he will pay more attention to this department of his profession than he has hitherto done. I visited several other literary characters; and, at about half past eight, the Pilot coming up, I took my passage in it to New Brunswick, which we reached at midnight, and where I immediately went to bed.

"The next morning was spent in visiting the few gentlemen who were likely to patronize my undertaking. I had another task of the same kind at Elizabethtown; and, without tiring you with details that would fill a volume, I shall only say that I reached Newark that day, having gratified the curiosity, and feasted the eyes, of a great number of people, who repaid me with the most extravagant compliments, which I would have very willingly exchanged for a few simple *subscriptions*. I spent nearly the whole of Saturday in Newark, where my book attracted as many starers as a bear or a mammoth would have done; and I arrived in New York the same evening. The next day I wrote a number of letters, enclosing copies of the prospectus, to different gentlemen in town. In the afternoon of Tuesday I took my book, and waited on each of those gentlemen to whom I had written the preceding day. Among these I found some friends, but more admirers. The professors of Columbia College expressed much esteem for my performance. The professor of languages, being a Scotchman, and also a Wilson, seemed to feel all the pride of national partiality so common

to his countrymen; and would have done me any favour in his power. I spent the whole of this week traversing the streets, from one particular house to another, till, I believe, I became almost as well known as the public crier, or the clerk of the market, for I could frequently perceive gentlemen point me out to others as I passed with my book under my arm.

* * * *

On Sunday morning, October 2, I went on board a packet for New Haven, distant about ninety miles. The wind was favourable, and carried us rapidly through Hellgate, (a place I had no intention of calling at in my tour) on the other side of which we found upwards of sixty vessels beating up for a passage. The Sound here, between Long Island and the main, is narrowed to less than half a mile, and filled with small islands, and enormous rocks under water, among which the tide roars and boils violently, and has proved fatal to many a seaman. At high water it is nearly as smooth as any other place, and can then be safely passed. The country, on the New York side, is ornamented with handsome villas, painted white, and surrounded by great numbers of Lombardy poplars. The breeze increasing to a gale, in eight hours from the time we set sail the high red-fronted mountain of New Haven rose to our view. In two hours more we landed; and, by the stillness and solemnity of the streets, recollected we were in New England, and that it was Sunday, which latter circumstance had been almost forgotten on board the packet-boat.

"This town is situated upon a sandy plain; and the streets are shaded with elm trees and poplars. In a large park or common, covered with grass, and crossed by two streets, and several foot paths, stand the church, the state house and college buildings, which last are one hundred and eighty yards in front. From these structures rise four or five wooden spires, which, in former time, as one of the professors informed me, were so infested by woodpeckers, which bored them in all directions, that, to preserve their steeples from destruction, it became necessary to set people, with guns, to watch and shoot

these invaders of the sanctuary. Just about the town the pasture fields and corn look well, but a few miles off, the country is poor and ill cultivated.

"The literati of New Haven received me with politeness and respect; and after making my usual rounds, which occupied a day and a half, I set off for Middletown, twenty-two miles distant. The country through which I passed was generally flat and sandy—in some places whole fields were entirely covered with sand, not a blade of vegetation to be seen, like some parts of New Jersey. Round Middletown, however, the country is really beautiful—the soil rich; and here I first saw the river Connecticut, stretching along the east side of the town, which consists of one very broad street, with rows of elms on each side. On entering I found the street filled with troops, it being muster day; and I counted two hundred and fifty horse, and six hundred foot, all in uniform. The sides of the street were choaked up with wagons, carts and wheel-barrows, filled with bread, roast beef, fowls, cheese, liquors, barrels of cider, and rum bottles. Some were singing out, "Here's the best brandy you ever put into your *head!*" others in dozens shouting, "Here's the round and sound gingerbread! most capital gingerbread!" In one place I observed a row of twenty or thirty country girls, drawn up with their backs to a fence, and two young fellows supplying them with rolls of bread from a neighbouring stall, which they ate with a hearty appetite, keeping nearly as good time with their grinders, as the militia did with their muskets. In another place the crowd had formed a ring, within which they danced to the catgut scrapings of an old negro. The spectators looked on with as much gravity as if they were listening to a sermon; and the dancers laboured with such seriousness, that it seemed more like a penance imposed on the poor devils, for past sins, than mere amusement.

"I waited on a Mr. A. of this town; and by him I was introduced to several others. He also furnished me with a good deal of information respecting the birds of New England. He

is a great sportsman—a man of fortune and education—and has a considerable number of stuffed birds, some of which he gave me, besides letters to several gentlemen of influence in Boston. I endeavoured to recompense him in the best manner I could, and again pursued my route to the north-east. The country between this and Hartford is extremely beautiful, much resembling that between Philadelphia and Frankford. The road is a hard sandy soil; and in one place I had an immense prospect of the surrounding country, nearly equal to that which we saw returning from Easton, but less covered with woods. On reaching Hartford, I waited on Mr. G., a member of congress, who recommended me to several others, particularly a Mr. W., a gentleman of taste and fortune, who was extremely obliging. The publisher of a newspaper here expressed the highest admiration of the work, and has since paid many handsome compliments to it in his publication, as three other editors did in New York. This is a species of currency that will neither purchase plates, nor pay the printer; but, nevertheless, it is gratifying to the vanity of an author—*when nothing better can be got.* My journey from Hartford to Boston, through Springfield, Worcester, &c. one hundred and twenty-eight miles, it is impossible for me to detail at this time. From the time I entered Massachusetts, until within ten miles of Boston, which distance is nearly two-thirds the length of the whole state, I took notice that the principal features of the country were stony mountains, rocky pasture fields, and hills and swamps adorned with pines. The fences, in every direction, are composed of strong stones; and, unless a few straggling, self-planted, stunted apple trees, overgrown with moss, deserve the name, there is hardly an orchard to be seen in ten miles. Every six or eight miles you come to a meeting-house, painted white, with a spire. I could perceive little difference in the form or elevation of their steeples.

"The people here make no distinction between *town* and *township;* and travellers frequently asked the driver of the stagecoach, "What town are we now in?" when perhaps we

were upon the top of a miserable barren mountain, several miles from a house. It is in vain to reason with the people on the impropriety of this—custom makes every absurdity proper. There is scarcely any currency in this country but paper, and I solemnly declare that I do not recollect having seen one hard dollar since I left New York. Bills even of twenty-five-cents, of a hundred different banks, whose very names one has never heard of before, are continually in circulation. I say nothing of the jargon which prevails in the country. Their boasted schools, if I may judge by the state of their school-houses, are no better than our own.

"Lawyers swarm in every town, like locusts; almost every door has the word *Office* painted over it, which, like the web of a spider, points out the place where the spoiler lurks for his prey. There is little or no improvement in agriculture; in fifty miles I did not observe a single grain or stubble field, though the country has been cleared and settled these one hundred and fifty years. In short, the *steady habits* of a great portion of the inhabitants of those parts of New England through which I passed, seem to be laziness, law bickerings and * * * *. A man here is as much ashamed of being seen walking the streets on Sunday, unless in going and returning from church, as many would be of being seen going to a * * * * * *.

"As you approach Boston the country improves in its appearance; the stone fences give place to those of posts and rails; the road becomes wide and spacious; and every thing announces a better degree of refinement and civilization. It was dark when I entered Boston, of which I shall give you some account in my next. I have visited the celebrated Bunker's Hill, and no devout pilgrim ever approached the sacred tomb of his holy prophet with more awful enthusiasm, and profound veneration, than I felt in tracing the grass-grown intrenchments of this hallowed spot, made immortal by the bravery of those heroes who defended it, whose ashes are now mingled

with its soil, and of whom a mean, beggarly *pillar of bricks* is all the memento."

TO MR. D. H. MILLER.

Windsor, Vermont, October 26, 1808.

"Dear Sir,

"I wrote you two or three weeks ago from Boston, where I spent about a week. A Mr. S., formerly private secretary to John Adams, introduced me to many of the first rank in the place, whose influence procured me an acquaintance with others; and I journied through the streets of Boston with my book, as I did at New York and other places, visiting all the literary characters I could find access to.

"I spent one morning examining Bunker's Hill, accompanied by lieutenant Miller and sergeant Carter, two old soldiers of the revolution, who were both in that celebrated battle, and who pointed out to me a great number of interesting places. The brother of general Warren, who is a respectable physician of Boston, became very much my friend, and related to me many other matters respecting the engagement.

"I visited the University at Cambridge, where there is a fine library, but the most tumultuous set of students I ever saw.

"From the top of Bunker's Hill, Boston, Charlestown, the ocean, islands and adjacent country, form the most beautifully varied prospect I ever beheld.

"The streets of Boston are a perfect labyrinth. The markets are dirty; the fish market is so filthy that I will not disgust you by a description of it. Wherever you walk you hear the most hideous howling, as if some miserable wretch were expiring on the wheel at every corner; this, however, is nothing but the draymen shouting to their horses. Their drays are twenty-eight feet long, drawn by two horses, and carry ten barrels of flour. From Boston I set out for Salem, the country between swampy, and in some places the most barren, rocky, and desolate in nature. Salem is a neat little town. The wharves were crowded with vessels. One wharf here is twenty hundred and twenty-

two feet long. I staid here two days, and again set off for Newburyport, through a rocky, uncultivated, steril country.

* * * *

"I travelled on through New Hampshire, stopping at every place where I was likely to do any business; and went as far east as Portland in Maine, where I staid three days, and, the supreme court being then sitting, I had an opportunity of seeing and conversing with people from the remotest boundaries of the United States in this quarter, and received much interesting information from them with regard to the birds that frequent these northern regions. From Portland I directed my course across the country, among dreary savage glens, and mountains covered with pines and hemlocks, amid whose black and half-burnt trunks the everlasting rocks and stones, that cover this country, "grinned horribly." One hundred and fifty-seven miles brought me to Dartmouth College, Newhampshire, on the Vermont line. Here I paid my addresses to the reverend fathers of literature, and met with a kind and obliging reception. Dr. Wheelock, the president, made me eat at his table, and the professors vied with each other to oblige me.

"I expect to be in Albany in five days, and if the legislature be sitting, I shall be detained perhaps three days there. In eight days more I hope to be in Philadelphia. I have laboured with the zeal of a knight errant in exhibiting this book of mine, wherever I went, travelling with it, like a beggar with his bantling, from town to town, and from one country to another. I have been loaded with praises—with compliments and kindnesses—shaken almost to pieces in stage coaches; have wandered among strangers, hearing the same *O's* and *Ah's*, and telling the same story a thousand times over—and for what? Ay, that's it! You are very anxious to know, and you *shall* know the whole when I reach Philadelphia."

TO MR. ALEXANDER LAWSON.

Albany, November 3, 1808.

"Dear Sir,

"Having a few leisure moments at disposal, I will devote them to your service in giving you a sketch of some circumstances in my long literary pilgrimage, not mentioned in my letters to Mr. Miller. And in the first place, I ought to thank you for the thousands of compliments I have received for my birds, from persons of all descriptions; which were chiefly due to the taste and skill of the engraver. In short, the book, in all its parts, so far exceeds the ideas and expectations of the first literary characters in the eastern section of the United States, as to command their admiration and respect. The only objection has been the sum of *one hundred and twenty dollars*, which, in innumerable instances, has risen like an evil genius between me and my hopes. Yet I doubt not but when those copies subscribed for are delivered, and the book a little better known, the whole number will be disposed of, and perhaps encouragement given to go on with the rest. To effect this, to me, most desirable object, I have encountered the fatigues of a long, circuitous, and expensive journey, with a zeal that has increased with increasing difficulties; and sorry I am to say that the whole number of subscribers which I have obtained amounts only to *forty-one*.

"While in New York I had the curiosity to call on the celebrated author of the "Rights of Man." He lives in Greenwich, a short way from the city. In the only decent apartment of a small indifferent-looking frame house, I found this extraordinary man, sitting wrapt in a night gown, the table before him covered with newspapers, with pen and ink beside him. Paine's face would have excellently suited the character of *Bardolph;* but the penetration and intelligence of his eye bespeak the man of genius, and of the world. He complained to me of his inability to walk, an exercise he was formerly fond of;—he examined my book, leaf by leaf, with great attention—desired

me to put down his name as a subscriber; and, after inquiring particularly for Mr. P. and Mr. B., wished to be remembered to both.

"My journey through almost the whole of New England has rather lowered the Yankees in my esteem. Except a few neat academies, I found their schoolhouses equally ruinous and deserted with ours—fields covered with stones—stone fences—scrubby oaks and pine trees—wretched orchards—scarcely one grain field in twenty miles—the taverns along the road dirty, and filled with loungers, brawling about law suits and politics—the people snappish, and extortioners, lazy, and two hundred years behind the Pennsylvanians in agricultural improvements. I traversed the country bordering the river Connecticut for nearly two hundred miles. Mountains rose on either side, sometimes three, six, or eight miles apart, the space between almost altogether alluvial; the plains fertile, but not half cultivated. From some projecting headlands I had immense prospects of the surrounding countries, every where clothed in pine, hemlock, and scrubby oak.

"It was late in the evening when I entered Boston, and, whirling through the narrow, lighted streets, or rather lanes, I could form but a very imperfect idea of the town. Early the next morning, resolved to see where I was, I sought out the way to Beacon Hill, the highest part of the town, and whence you look down on the roofs of the houses—the bay interspersed with islands—the ocean—the surrounding country, and distant mountains of New Hampshire; but the most singular objects are the long wooden bridges, of which there are five or six, some of them three quarters of a mile long, uniting the towns of Boston and Charlestown with each other, and with the main land. I looked round with an eager eye for that eminence so justly celebrated in the history of the revolution of the United States, Bunker's Hill, but I could see nothing that I could think deserving of the name, till a gentleman, who stood by, pointed out a white monument upon a height beyond Charlestown, which he said was the place. I explored my way thither

without paying much attention to other passing objects; and, in tracing the streets of Charlestown, was astonished and hurt at the indifference with which the inhabitants directed me to the place.* I inquired if there were any person still living here who had been in the battle, and I was directed to a Mr. Miller, who was a lieutenant in this memorable affair. He is a man of about sixty—stout, remarkably fresh coloured, with a benign and manly countenance. I introduced myself without ceremony—shook his hand with sincere cordiality, and said, with some warmth, that I was proud of the honour of meeting with one of the heroes of Bunker's Hill—the first unconquerable champions of their country. He looked at me, pressed my hand in his, and the tears instantly glistened in his eyes, which as instantly called up corresponding ones in my own. In our way to the place he called on a Mr. Carter, who he said was also in the action, and might recollect some circumstances which he had forgotten. With these two veterans I spent three hours, the most interesting to me of any of my life. As they pointed

* We have here a trait of character worthy of note. Wilson's enthusiasm did not permit him to reflect, that an object which presents uncommon attractions to one who beholds it for the first time, can have no such effect upon the minds of the multitude, accustomed to view it from their infancy; and in whose breasts those chaste and exquisite feelings which result from taste, refined by culture, can have no place.

But what Wilson felt upon this occasion, was that which almost all men of genius and sensibility experience when similarly situated—that divine enthusiasm, which exalts one, as it were, above mortality, and which commands our respect in proportion as the subject of it is estimable or great.

Who has not read, or having read, who can forget, that admirable passage in Johnson's Journey to the Hebrides, wherein the illustrious traveller relates his reflections on his landing upon the island of Icolmkill! "Far from me, and from my friends," says he, "be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue." That this frigid philosophy was a stranger to the soul of Wilson, we have his own declaration in evidence; and so little skilled was he in the art of concealing his emotions, that, on any occasion which awakened his sensibility, he would exhibit the impulse of simple nature by weeping like a child.

out to me the route of the British—the American intrenchments—the place where the greatest slaughter was made—the spot where Warren fell, and where he was thrown amid heaps of the dead, I felt as though I could have encountered a whole battalion myself in the same glorious cause. The old soldiers were highly delighted with my enthusiasm; we drank a glass of wine to the memory of the illustrious dead, and parted almost with regret.

"From Boston to Portland, in the District of Maine, you are almost always in the neighbourhood, or within sight, of the Atlantic. The country may be called a mere skeleton of rocks, and fields of sand, in many places entirely destitute of wood, except a few low scrubby junipers, in others covered with pines of a diminutive growth. On entering the tavern in Portland, I took up the newspaper of the day, in which I found my song of *Freedom and Peace*,* which I afterwards heard read before a numerous company, (for the supreme court was sitting,) with great emphasis, as a most excellent song; but I said nothing on the subject.

"From Portland I steered across the country for the northern parts of Vermont, among barren, savage, pine-covered mountains, through regions where nature and art have done infinitely less to make it a fit residence for man than any country I ever traversed. Among these dreary tracts I found winter had already commenced, and the snow several inches deep. I called at Dartmouth College, the president of which, as well as of all I visited in New England, subscribed. Though sick with a severe cold, and great fatigue, I continued my route to this place, passing and calling at great numbers of small towns in my way.

"The legislature is at present in session—the newspapers have to-day taken notice of my book, and inserted my advertisement—I shall call on the principal people—employ an agent

* A certain military association of Philadelphia, being disposed to dignify the national celebration of this year, offered a gold medal for the best song which should be written for the occasion; and Wilson bore away the prize from many competitors.

among some of the booksellers in Albany, and return home by New York."

Wilson after tarrying at home a few days, departed to the southward, visiting every city and town of importance as far as Savannah in the state of Georgia. This journey being performed in the winter, and alone, was of course not attended with many travelling comforts; and to avoid the inconveniences of a return by land, he embarked in a vessel, and arrived at New-York in the month of March, 1809. This was rather an unproductive tour; but few subscriptions being obtained.

TO MR. D. H. MILLER.

Washington City, December 24, 1808.

"Dear Sir,

"I sit down, before leaving this place, to give you a few particulars of my expedition. I spent nearly a week in Baltimore, with tolerable success, having procured sixteen subscribers there. In Annapolis I *passed* my book through both houses of the legislature: the wise men of Maryland stared and gaped, from bench to bench; but having never heard of such a thing as one hundred and twenty dollars for a *book*, the *ayes* for subscribing were *none;* and so it was unanimously determined in the *negative.* Nowise discouraged by this *sage* decision, I pursued my route through the tobacco fields, sloughs and swamps, of this illiterate corner of the state, to Washington, distant thirty-eight miles; and in my way opened fifty-five gates. I was forewarned that I should meet with many of these embarrassments, and I opened twenty-two of them with all the patience and philosophy I could muster; but when I still found then coming thicker and faster, my patience and philosophy both abandoned me, and I saluted every new gate (which obliged me to plunge into the mud to open it) with perhaps less Christian resignation than I ought to have done. The negroes there are very numerous, and most wretchedly clad: their whole covering, in many instances, assumes the ap-

pearance of neither coat, waistcoat, nor breeches, but a motley mass of coarse, dirty woolen rags, of various colours, gathered up about them. When I stopped at some of the negro huts to inquire the road, both men and women huddled up their filthy bundles of rags around them, with both arms, in order to cover their nakedness, and came out, very civilly, to show me the way.

"I cannot pretend, within the bounds of a letter, to give you a complete description of Washington. It consists of a great extent of confined commons, one-half of which is nearly level, and little higher than the Potomac; the other parts, on which the Capitol and President's house are built, are high and commanding. The site is much better than I expected to find it; and is certainly a noble place for a great metropolis. I saw *one* brick house building, which is the only improvement, of that kind, going on at present. The taverns and boarding houses here are crowded with an odd assemblage of characters. Fat placemen, expectants, contractors, petitioners, office-hunters, lumber-dealers, salt-manufacturers, and numerous other adventurers. Among the rest are deputations from different Indian nations, along our distant frontiers, who are come hither to receive their last *alms* from the President, previous to his retirement.

"The President received me very kindly. I asked for nobody to introduce me, but merely sent him in a line that I was there; when he ordered me to be immediately admitted. He has given me a letter to a gentleman in Virginia, who is to introduce me to a person there, who, Mr. Jefferson says, has spent his whole life in studying the manners of our birds; and from whom I am to receive a world of facts and observations. The President intended to send for this person himself; and to take down, from his mouth, what he knows on the subject; thinking it a pity, as he says, that the knowledge he possesses should die with him. But he has entrusted the business to me; and I have promised him an account of our interview.

"All the subscribers I have gleaned here amount to seven-

teen. I shall set off, on finishing this letter, to Georgetown and Alexandria. I will write you, or some of my friends, from Richmond."

TO MR. D. H. MILLER.

Charleston, February 22, 1809.

"Dear Sir,

"I have passed through a considerable extent of country since I wrote you last; and met with a variety of adventures, some of which may perhaps amuse you. Norfolk turned out better than I expected. I left that place on one of the coldest mornings I have experienced since leaving Philadelphia.

* * * *

"I mentioned to you in my last that the streets of Norfolk were in a most disgraceful state; but I was informed that some time before, they had been much worse; that at one time the news-carrier delivered his papers from a boat; which he poled along through the mire; and that a party of sailors, having nothing better to do, actually lanched a ship's long-boat into the streets, rowing along with four oars through the mud, while one stood at the bow, heaving the lead, and singing out the depth.

"I passed through a flat, pine covered country, from Norfolk to Suffolk, twenty-four miles distant; and lodged, in the way, in the house of a planter, who informed me that every year, in August and September, almost all his family are laid up with the bilious fever; that at one time forty of his people were sick; and that of thirteen children, only three were living. Two of these, with their mother, appeared likely not to be long tenants of this world. Thirty miles farther, I came to a small place on the river Nottaway, called Jerusalem. Here I found the river swelled to such an extraordinary height, that the oldest inhabitant had never seen the like. After passing along the bridge, I was conveyed, in a boat termed a *flat*, a mile and three-quarters through the woods, where the torrent sweeping along in many places rendered this sort of navigation rather

disagreeable. I proceeded on my journey, passing through solitary pine woods, perpetually interrupted by swamps, that covered the road with water two and three feet deep, frequently half a mile at a time, looking like a long river or pond. These in the afternoon were surmountable; but the weather being exceedingly severe, they were covered every morning with a sheet of ice, from half an inch to an inch thick, that cut my horse's legs and breast. After passing a bridge, I had many times to wade, and twice to swim my horse, to get to the shore. I attempted to cross the Roanoke at three different ferries, thirty-five miles apart, and at last succeeded at a place about fifteen miles below Halifax. A violent snow storm made the roads still more execrable.

"The productions of these parts of North Carolina are hogs, turpentine, tar, and apple brandy. A tumbler of toddy is usually the morning's beverage of the inhabitants, as soon as they get out of bed. So universal is the practice, that the first thing you find them engaged in, after rising, is preparing the brandy *toddy*. You can scarcely meet a man whose lips are not parched and chopped or blistered with drinking this poison. Those who do not drink it, they say, are sure of the ague. I, however, escaped. The pine woods have a singular appearance, every tree being stripped, on one or more sides, of the bark, for six or seven feet up. The turpentine covers these parts in thick masses. I saw the people, in different parts of the woods, mounted on benches, chopping down the sides of the trees; leaving a trough or box in the tree for the turpentine to run into. Of hogs they have immense multitudes; one person will sometimes own five hundred. The leaders have bells round their necks; and every drove knows its particular call, whether it be a conch-shell, or the bawling of a negro, though half a mile off. Their owners will sometimes drive them for four or five days to a market, without once feeding them.

"The taverns are the most desolate and beggarly imaginable: bare, bleak, and dirty walls;—one or two old broken chairs, and a bench, form all the furniture. The white females seldom

make their appearance; and every thing must be transacted through the medium of negroes. At supper, you sit down to a meal, the very sight of which is sufficient to deaden the most eager appetite; and you are surrounded by half a dozen dirty, half-naked blacks, male and female, whom any man of common scent might smell a quarter of a mile off. The house itself is raised upon props, four or five feet; and the space below is left open for the hogs, with whose charming vocal performance the wearied traveller is serenaded the whole night long, till he is forced to curse the hogs, the house, and every thing about it.

"I crossed the river Taw at Washington, for Newbern, which stands upon a sandy plain, between the rivers Trent and Neuse, both of which abound with alligators. Here I found the shad fishery begun, on the 5th instant; and wished to have some of you with me to assist in dissecting some of the finest shad I ever saw. Thence to Wilmington was my next stage, one hundred miles, with only one house for the accommodation of travellers on the road; two landlords having been broken up with the fever.

"The general features of North Carolina, where I crossed it, are immense, solitary, pine savannas, through which the road winds among stagnant ponds, swarming with alligators; dark, sluggish creeks, of the colour of brandy, over which are thrown high wooden bridges, without railings, and so crazy and rotten as not only to alarm one's horse, but also the rider, and to make it a matter of thanksgiving with both when they get fairly *over*, without going *through;* enormous cypress swamps, which, to a stranger, have a striking, desolate, and ruinous appearance. Picture to yourself a forest of prodigious trees, rising, as thick as they can grow, from a vast flat and impenetrable morass, covered for ten feet from the ground with reeds. The leafless limbs of the cypresses are clothed with an extraordinary kind of moss, (*Tillandsia usneoides,*) from two to ten feet long, in such quantities, that fifty men might conceal themselves in one tree. Nothing in this country struck me with such surprise as the prospect of several thousand acres of such timber, loaded, as it were, with many million tons of tow, waving in the wind.

I attempted to penetrate several of these swamps, with my gun, in search of something new; but, except in some chance places, I found it altogether impracticable. I coasted along their borders, however, in many places, and was surprised at the great profusion of evergreens, of numberless sorts; and a variety of berries that I knew nothing of. Here I found multitudes of birds that never winter with us in Pennsylvania, living in abundance. Though the people told me that the alligators are so numerous as to destroy many of their pigs, calves, dogs, &c., yet I have never been enabled to get my eye on one, though I have been several times in search of them with my gun. In Georgia, they tell me, they are ten times more numerous; and I expect some sport among them. I saw a dog at the river Santee, who swims across when he pleases, in defiance of these voracious animals; when he hears them behind him, he wheels round, and attacks them, often seizing them by the snout. They generally retreat, and he pursues his route again, serving every one that attacks him in the same manner.* He belongs to the boatman; and, when left behind, always takes to the water.

"As to the character of the North Carolinians, were I to judge of it by the specimens which I met with in taverns, I should pronounce them to be the most ignorant, debased, indolent and dissipated, portion of the union. But I became acquainted with a few such noble exceptions, that, for *their*

* This is an uncommon instance of intrepidity in the canine race, and is worthy of record. It is well-known that the alligator is fond of dog-flesh; and the dog appears to be instructed by instinct to avoid so dangerous an enemy, it being difficult to induce him to approach the haunts of the alligator, even when encouraged by the example of his master. A fine stout spaniel accompanied me to East Florida. Being one day engaged in wading through a pond, in pursuit of ducks, with my dog swimming behind me, apparently delighted with his employment, he smelt an alligator: he immediately made to the shore, fled into the forest, and all my endeavours to prevail with him to return were ineffectual. Ever after, when we approached that pond, he exhibited such evidences of apprehension, that I was fain to retire with him, lest his terror should again induce him to flee, where he would have, probably, been lost.

sakes, I am willing to believe they are all better than they seemed to be.

"Wilmington contains about three thousand souls; and yet there is not one cultivated field within several miles of it. The whole country, on this side of the river, is a mass of sand, into which you sink up to the ankles; and hardly a blade of grass is to be seen. All about is pine barrens. * * *

"From Wilmington I rode through solitary pine savannas, and cypress swamps, as before; sometimes thirty miles without seeing a hut, or human being. On arriving at the Wackamaw, Pedee, and Black river, I made long zigzags among the rich nabobs, who live on their rice plantations, amidst large villages of negro huts. One of these gentlemen told me that he had "*something better than six hundred head of blacks!*" These excursions detained me greatly. The roads to the plantations were so long, so difficult to find, and so bad, and the hospitality of the planters was such, that I could scarcely get away again. I ought to have told you that the deep sands of South Carolina had so worn out my horse, that, with all my care, I found he would give up. Chance led me to the house of a planter, named V., about forty miles north of the river Wackamaw, where I proposed to bargain with him, and to give up my young *blood horse* for another in exchange; giving him at least as good a character as he deserved. *He* asked twenty dollars to boot, and *I* thirty. We parted, but I could perceive that he had taken a liking to my steed; so I went on. He followed me to the seabeach, about three miles, under pretence of pointing out to me the road; and there, on the sands, amidst the roar of the Atlantic, we finally bargained; and I found myself in possession of a large, well formed and elegant, sorrel horse, that ran off with me, at a canter, for fifteen miles along the sea shore; and travelled the same day forty-two miles, with nothing but a few mouthfuls of rice straw, which I got from a negro. If you have ever seen the rushes with which carpenters sometimes smooth their work, you may form some idea of the common fare of the South Carolina horses. I

found now that I had got a very devil before my chair; the least sound of the whip made him spring half a rod at a leap; no road, however long or heavy, could tame him. Two or three times he had nearly broke my neck, and chair to boot; and at Georgetown ferry he threw one of the boatmen into the river. But he is an excellent traveller, and for that one quality I forgave him all his sins, only keeping a close rein, and a sharp look out.

* * * *

"I should now give you some account of Charleston, with the streets of which I am as well acquainted as I was with those of New York and Boston; but I reserve that till we meet. I shall only say, that the streets cross each other at right angles—are paved on the sides—have a low bed of sand in the middle; and frequently are in a state fit to compare to those of Norfolk. The town, however, is neat—has a gay appearance —is full of shops; and has a market place which far surpasses those of Philadelphia for cleanliness, and is an honour to the city. Many of the buildings have two, three, and four ranges of piazzas, one above another, with a great deal of gingerbread work about them. The streets are crowded with negroes; and their quarrels often afford amusement to the passengers. In a street called Broad street, I every day see a crowd of wretchedly clad blacks, huddled in a corner for sale: people handling them as they do black cattle. Here are female chimney sweeps; stalls with roasted sweet potatoes for sale; and on the wharves clubs of blacks, male and female, sitting round fires, amid heaps of oyster-shells, cooking their victuals—these seem the happiest mortals on earth. The finest groups for a comic painter might every day be found here that any country can produce.

"The ladies of Charleston are dressed with taste; but their pale and languid countenances by no means correspond with their figures. * * *

"To-morrow afternoon I shall set off for Savannah. I have

collected one hundred and twenty-five subscribers since leaving home."

Savannah, March 5, 1809.

" Dear Sir,

" I have now reached the *ne plus ultra* of my peregrinations, and shall return home by the first opportunity. Whether this shall be by land or water, depends on circumstances; if the former, I shall go by Augusta, where I am told twelve or fifteen subscribers may be procured. These, however, would be insufficient to tempt me that way, for I doubt whether my funds would be sufficient to carry me through.

" The innkeepers in the southern states are like the vultures that hover about their cities; and treat their *guests* as the others do their *carrion:* are as glad to see them, and pick them as bare. The last letter I wrote you was on my arrival in Charleston. I found greater difficulties to surmount there than I had thought of. I solicited several people for a list of names, but that abject and disgraceful listlessness, and want of energy, which have unnerved the whites of all descriptions in these states, put me off from time to time, till at last I was obliged to walk the streets, and pick out those houses which, from their appearance, indicated wealth and taste in the occupants, and introduce myself. Neither M., Dr. R., nor any other that I applied to, gave me the least assistance, though they promised, and knew I was a stranger. I was going on in this way, when the keeper of the library, a Scotsman, a good man, whose name had been mentioned to me, made me out a list from the directory; and among these I spent ten days. The extreme servility, and superabundance of negroes, have ruined the energy and activity of the white population. M. appears to be fast sinking into the same insipidity of character, with a pretty good sprinkling of rapacity. In Charleston, however, I met with some excellent exceptions, among the first ranks of society; and the work excited universal admiration. Dr. D. introduced it very handsomely into the Courier. On hearing of general Wilkinson's arrival, I waited on him. He received

me with kindness—said he valued the book highly—and paid me the twelve dollars; on which I took occasion to prognosticate my final success on receiving its *first fruits* from him.

"I will not tire you by a recital of the difficulties which I met with between Charleston and Savannah, by bad roads, and the extraordinary flood of the river Savannah, where I had nearly lost my horse, he having, by his restiveness, thrown himself overboard; and, had I not, at great personal risk, rescued him, he might have floated down to Savannah before me.

"I arrived here on Tuesday last, and advertised in the Republican, the editors of which interested themselves considerably for me, speaking of my book in their Thursday's paper with much approbation. The expense of advertising in the southern states is great; but I found it really necessary. I have now seen every person in this place and neighbourhood, of use to be seen. Here I close the list of my subscriptions, obtained at a *price* worth more than five times their amount. But, in spite of a host of difficulties, I have gained my point; and should the work be continued in the style it has been begun, I have no doubt but we may increase the copies to four hundred. I have endeavoured to find persons of respectability in each town, who will receive and deliver the volumes, without recompense, any further than allowing them to make the first selection. By this means the rapacity of *some* booksellers will be avoided.

"The weather has been extremely warm these ten days, the thermometer stood in the shade on Friday and Saturday last, at 78° and 79°. I have seen no frost since the 5th of February. The few gardens here are as green and luxuriant as ours are in summer—full of flowering shrubbery, and surrounded with groves of orange trees, fifteen and twenty feet high, loaded with fruit. The streets are deep beds of heavy sand, without the accommodation of a foot pavement. I most sincerely hope that I may be able to return home by water; if not, I shall trouble you with one letter more."

TO MR. WILLIAM BARTRAM.

Savannah, March 5, 1809.

"Three months, my dear friend, are passed since I parted from you in Kingsess. I have been travelling ever since; and one half of my journey is yet to be performed—but that half is homewards, and through old Neptune's dominions, where I trust I shall not be long detained. This has been the most arduous, expensive, and fatiguing, expedition I ever undertook. I have, however, gained my point in procuring two hundred and fifty subscribers, in all, for my Ornithology; and a great mass of information respecting the birds that winter in the southern states, and some that never visit the middle states; and this information I have derived personally, and can therefore the more certainly depend upon it. I have, also, found several new birds, of which I can find no account in Linneus. All these things we will talk over when we meet.

* * * *

"I visited a great number of the rich planters on the rivers Santee and Pedee, and was much struck with the miserable swarms of negroes around them. In these rice plantations, there are great numbers of birds, never supposed to winter so far north, and their tameness surprised me. There are also many here that never visit Pennsylvania. Round Georgetown I also visited several rich planters, all of whom entertained me hospitably. I spent ten days in Charleston, still, in every place where I stopped a day or two, making excursions with my gun.

"On the commons, near Charleston, I presided at a singular feast. The company consisted of two hundred and thirty-seven Carrion Crows, (*Vultur atratus*) five or six dogs, and myself, though I only kept order, and left the eating part entirely to the others. I sat so near to the dead horse, that my feet touched his, and yet at one time I counted thirty-eight vultures on and within him, so that hardly an inch of his flesh could be seen for them. Linneus and others have confounded this Vultur with the Turkey Buzzard, but they are two very distinct species.

"As far north as Wilmington, in North Carolina, I met with the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. I killed two, and winged a male, who alarmed the whole town of Wilmington, screaming exactly like a young child crying violently, so that every body supposed I had a baby under the apron of my chair, till I took out the bird to prevent the people from stopping me. This bird I confined in the room I was to sleep in, and in less than half an hour he made his way through the plaster, the lath, and partly through the weather boards; and would have escaped, if I had not accidentally come in. The common people confound the *P. principalis* and *P. pileatus* together.

* * * *

"I am utterly at a loss in my wood rambles here, for there are so many trees, shrubs, plants, and insects, that I know nothing of. There are immense quantities of elegant butterflies, and other singular insects. I met with a grasshopper so big that I took it for a bird; it settles upon trees and bushes. I have kept a record of all the birds which I have seen or shot since I left home.

"This journey will be of much use to me, as I have formed acquaintance in almost every place, who are able to transmit me information. Great numbers of our summer birds are already here; and many are usually here all winter.

"There is a Mr. Abbot here, who has resided in Georgia thirty-three years, drawing insects and birds. I have been on several excursions with him. He is a very good observer, and paints well. He has published, in London, one large folio volume of the Lepidopterous Insects of Georgia. It is a very splendid work. There is only one vessel here bound to New York; she sails some time next week, and I shall take my passage in her. I caught a fever here by getting wet; I hope the sea air, and sea-sickness, will carry it off."

Savannah, March 8, 1809.

"Dear Sir,

"Having now visited all the towns within one hundred miles of the Atlantic, from Maine to Georgia, and done as much for

this bantling book of mine as ever author did for any progeny of his brain, I now turn my wishful eye towards home. There is a charm, a melody, in this little word *home*, which only those know, who have forsaken it to wander among strangers, exposed to dangers, fatigues, insults and impositions, of a thousand nameless kinds. Perhaps I feel the force of this idea rather more at present than usual, being indisposed with a slight fever these three days, which a dose of sea-sickness will, I hope, rid me of. The weather since my arrival in this place has been extremely warm for the season. The wind generally south-west, and the thermometer ranging between 75 and 82. To me it feels more intolerable than our summer heat in Philadelphia. The streets of Savannah are also mere beds of burning sand, without even a foot pavement; and until one learns to traverse them with both eyes and mouth shut, both are plentifully filled with showers and whirlwinds of sand. I was longer detained in Charleston than I expected, partly on account of the races, which occupied the minds of many I wished to visit, to the exclusion of every thing else. At nine they were in bed; at ten breakfasting—dressing at eleven—gone out at noon, and not visible again until ten next morning. I met, however, with some excellent exceptions, among the first ranks of society, and my work excited universal admiration. Dr. D. introduced it very handsomely into the Courier.

"The indolence, want of energy, and dissipation, of the wealthy part of the community in that place, are truly contemptible. The superabundance of negroes in the southern states has destroyed the activity of the whites. The carpenter, bricklayer, and even the blacksmith, stand with their hands in their pockets, overlooking their negroes. The planter orders his servant to tell the overseer to see my horse fed and taken care of; the overseer sends another negro to tell the driver to send one of his hands to do it. Before half of this routine is gone through, I have myself unharnessed, rubbed down, and fed my horse. Every thing must be done through the agency of these slovenly blacks. * * * These, however, are not one-

tenth of the curses slavery has brought on the southern states. Nothing has surprised me more than the cold melancholy reserve of the females, of the best families, in South Carolina and Georgia. Old and young, single and married, all have that dull frigid insipidity, and reserve, which is attributed to solitary old maids. Even in their own houses they scarce utter any thing to a stranger but yes or no, and one is perpetually puzzled to know whether it proceeds from awkwardness or dislike. Those who have been at some of their balls say that the ladies hardly ever speak or smile, but dance with as much gravity, as if they were performing some ceremony of devotion. On the contrary, the negro wenches are all sprightliness and gayety; and if report be not a defamer—(*here there is a hiatus in the manuscript*) which render the men callous to all the finer sensations of love, and female excellence.

"I will not detain you by a recital of my journey from Charleston to Savannah. In crossing the Savannah river, at a place called the Two Sisters' Ferry, my horse threw himself into the torrent, and had I not, at the risk of my own life, rescued him, would have been drowned."

Of the first volume of the Ornithology, only two hundred copies had been printed. But it was now thought expedient to strike off a new edition of three hundred more; as the increasing approbation of the public warranted the expectation of corresponding support.

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

Philadelphia, August 4, 1809.

"The second volume of "American Ornithology" being now nearly ready to go to press, and the plates in considerable forwardness, you will permit me to trespass on your time, for a few moments, by inquiring if you have any thing interesting to add to the history of the following birds, the figures of which will be found in this volume.

* * * *

"I have myself already said every thing of the foregoing

that my own observations suggested, or that I have been enabled to collect from those on whom I could rely. As it has fallen to my lot to be the biographer of the feathered tribes of the United States, I am solicitous to do full justice to every species; and I would not conceal one good quality that any one of them possesses. I have paid particular attention to the mocking-bird, humming-bird, king-bird and cat-bird; all the principal traits in their character I have delineated at full. If you have any thing to add on either of them, I wish you would communicate it in the form of a letter, addressed particularly to me. Your favourable opinion of my work (if such you have) would, if publicly known, be of infinite service to me, and procure me many friends.*

"I assure you, my dear friend, that this undertaking has involved me in many difficulties and expenses which I never dreamt of;† and I have never yet received one cent from it. I

* This instance of Wilson's diffidence of his own talents and acquirements is too remarkable to be passed over without a note. He seemed to fear lest the intrinsic merit of his work should not be sufficient, of itself, to get it into notice; and therefore he solicited the favourable opinion of one, to whose judgment in these matters, he felt assured, the public paid a deference. Contrasted with this modest deportment, how contemptible is the vanity, and self conceit, of those writers, who, whether they compose a superficial essay, for the transactions of a learned society, or compile a bald and meager pamphlet, present themselves before the public with an air of importance, which should seem to *demand* that countenance and applause, as a matter of right, which true merit humbly *requests* as a favour.

† The great expense of the publication prevented the author from giving all his plates that finish which his taste and judgment would have approved; but that in some instances extraordinary pains were bestowed upon them, a cursory glance will render evident. I have Mr. Lawson's authority for asserting, that, so anxious was he to encourage his friend, frequently after computing the time spent upon perfecting his work, he found his reward did not amount to more than *fifty cents* per day.

From a note to this gentleman, I make the following extract, relating to the bald eagle:

"I hope you go on courageously with the eagle; let no expense deter you from giving it the freest and most masterly touches of your graver. I think we shall be able to offer it as a competitor with the best that this country or Europe can produce."

am, therefore, a volunteer in the cause of Natural History, impelled by nobler views than those of money. The second volume will be ready for delivery on the first of January next. I have received communications from many different parts of the United States; with some drawings, and offers of more. But these are rarely executed with such precision as is necessary for a work of this kind.

"Let me know if you have ever seen the nest of Catesby's *cowpen-bird.* I have every reason to believe that this bird never builds itself a nest, but, like the cuckoo of Europe, drops its eggs into the nests of other birds; and leaves the result to their mercy and management. I have found no less than six nests this season, with each a young cow-bird contained in it. One of these, which I had found in the nest of the Maryland yellow-throat, and which occupied the whole nest, I brought home, and put it into the cage of a crested red-bird, who became its foster father, and fed, and reared it, with great affection. It begins to chant a little.

"I have just heard from our old friend M* *. He has not yet published the first number of his work; and Bonaparte has been so busy with cutting throats, and building bridges, in the forests of Austria, that the *Inspector of the Forests of France* has not yet received his appointment."

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

October 11, 1809.

"Thanks for your bird, so neatly stuffed, that I was just about to skin it. It is the *Rallus virginianus* of Turton, and agrees exactly with his description. The one in company was probably the female. Turton mentions four species as inhabitants of the United States. I myself have seen six. Mr. Abbot of Savannah showed me two new species. I found the *sora,* as the Virginians call it, in the rice flats near Savannah, in March. General Wilkinson told me that the sora was in multitudes at Detroit. Query—don't you think they breed in the north, like the rice-birds? Are not the European naturalists mistaken in

saying that the reed-birds or rice-birds pass *from* the Island of Cuba, in September, to Carolina? All the Spaniards with whom I have conversed, say that these birds are seen in Cuba, early in the spring only, and again in October. And the people of the District of Maine, of all the New England states, and those who have lived on the river Illinois, declare that these birds breed there in vast numbers.

"I have many times been told that our small snow-bird *(fringilla hudsonia)* breeds in the Great Swamp, which I can hardly believe. When I was in Williamsburg, Virginia, Bishop Madison told me of a mountain, in the interior of that state, where they bred in multitudes. I have lately had the most positive assurances from a gentleman who lived on the ranges of the Alleghany, about two hundred and fifty miles distant, that he saw them there four months ago; and that they built their nests almost every where among the long grass. He said he took particular notice of them, as he had heard it said down here, that they changed to chipping sparrows in summer. What think you of these matters?"

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

Philadelphia, Nov. 11, 1809.

"Dear Sir,

"Since I parted from you yesterday evening, I have ruminated a great deal on my proposed journey; I have considered the advantages and disadvantages of the three modes of proceeding: on horseback—in the stage-coach, and on foot. Taking every thing into view, I have at length determined to adopt the last, as being the cheapest, the best adapted for examining the country we pass through; the most favourable to health; and, in short, except for its fatigues, the best mode for a scientific traveller or naturalist, in every point of view. I have also thought that by this determination I will be so happy as to secure your company, for which I would willingly sustain as much hardship, and as many deprivations, as I am able to bear.

"If this determination should meet your approbation, and if you are willing to encounter the hardships of such a pedestrian journey, let me know as soon as is convenient. I think one dollar a day, each, will be fully sufficient for our expenses, by a strict regard, at all times, to economy."

The second volume of the Ornithology was published in January, 1810; and Wilson set out for Pittsburg, the latter part of the same month, in his route to New Orleans. I trust that no apology is necessary for introducing the following letters, addressed to Mr. Lawson, into these memoirs, notwithstanding three of them are well known to the public, having originally appeared in the Port Folio.*

TO MR. ALEXANDER LAWSON.

Pittsburg, February 22d, 1810.

"Dear Sir,

"From this *first* stage of my Ornithological pilgrimage, I sit down, with pleasure, to give you some account of my adventures since we parted. On arriving at Lancaster, I waited on the governor, secretary of state, and such other great folks as were likely to be useful to me. The governor received me with civility, passed some good natured compliments on the volumes, and readily added his name to my list. He seems an active man, of plain good sense, and little ceremony. By Mr. L. I was introduced to many members of both houses, but I found them, in general, such a pitiful, squabbling, political mob; so split up, and justling about the mere formalities of legislation, without knowing any thing of its realities, that I abandoned them in disgust. I must, however, except from this censure a few intelligent individuals, friends to science, and possessed of taste, who treated me with great kindness. On Friday evening I set out for Columbia, where I spent one day in vain. I crossed the Susquehannah on Sunday forenoon, with some difficulty, having to cut our way through the ice for several hundred yards; and passing on to York, paid my re-

* New Series, vols. III, 499, IV, 310, VII, 34.

spects to all the literati of that place without success. Five miles north of this town lives a very extraordinary character, between eighty and ninety years of age, who has lived by trapping birds and quadrupeds these thirty years. Dr. F. carried me out in a sleigh to see him, and presented me with a tolerably good full length figure of him; he has also promised to transmit to me such a collection of facts relative to this singular original, as will enable me to draw up an interesting narrative of him for the Port Folio. I carried him half a pound of snuff, of which he is insatiably fond, taking it by handfuls. I was much diverted with the astonishment he expressed on looking at the plates of my work—he could tell me anecdotes of the greater part of the subjects of the first volume, and some of the second. One of his traps, which he says he invented himself, is remarkable for ingenuity, and extremely simple. Having a letter from Dr. Muhlenberg to a clergyman in Hanover, I passed on through a well cultivated country, chiefly inhabited by Germans, to that place, where a certain Judge took upon himself to say, that such a book as mine *ought not to be encouraged, as it was not within the reach of the commonality; and therefore inconsistent with our republican institutions!* By the same mode of reasoning, which I did not dispute, I undertook to prove him a greater culprit than myself, in erecting a large, elegant, three-story brick house, so much beyond the reach of the *commonality*, as he called them, and consequently grossly contrary to our republican institutions. I harangued this Solomon of the Bench more seriously afterwards, pointing out to him the great influence of science on a young rising nation like ours, and particularly the science of Natural History, till he began to show such symptoms of *intellect*, as to seem ashamed of what he had said.

"From Hanover I passed through a thinly inhabited country; and crossing the North Mountain, at a pass called Newman's Gap, arrived at Chambersburg, whence I next morning returned to Carlisle, to visit the reverend doctors of the college. * * *

" The towns of Chambersburg and Shippensburg produced me nothing. On Sunday, the 11th, I left the former of these places in the stage coach; and in fifteen miles began to ascend the Alpine regions of the Alleghany mountains, where above, around, and below us, nothing appeared but prodigious declivities, covered with woods; and, the weather being fine, such a profound silence prevailed among these aerial solitudes, as impressed the soul with awe, and a kind of fearful sublimity. Something of this arose from my being alone, having left the coach several miles below. These high ranges continued for more than one hundred miles to Greensburg, thirty-two miles from Pittsburg; thence the country is nothing but an assemblage of steep hills, and deep vallies, descending rapidly till you reach within seven miles of this place, where I arrived on the 15th instant. We were within two miles of Pittsburg, when suddenly the road descends a long and very steep hill, where the Alleghany river is seen at hand, on the right, stretching along a rich bottom, and bounded by a high ridge of hills on the west. After following this road, parallel with the river, and about a quarter of a mile from it, through a rich low valley, a cloud of black smoke, at its extremity, announced the town of Pittsburg. On arriving at the town, which stands on a low flat, and looks like a collection of Blacksmith's shops, Glasshouses, Breweries, Forges and Furnaces, the Monongahela opened to the view, on the left, running along the bottom of a range of hills so high that the sun, at this season, sets to the town of Pittsburg at a little past four: this range continues along the Ohio as far as the view reaches. The ice had just begun to give way in the Monongahela, and came down in vast bodies for the three following days. It has now begun in the Alleghany, and, at the moment I write, the river presents a white mass of rushing ice.

" The country beyond the Ohio, to the west, appears a mountainous and hilly region. The Monongahela is lined with arks, usually called Kentucky-boats, waiting for the rising of the river, and the absence of the ice, to descend. A per-

spective view of the town of Pittsburg at this season, with the numerous arks and covered keel-boats preparing to descend the Ohio; its hills, its great rivers—the pillars of smoke rising from its furnaces and glass-works—would make a noble picture. I began a very diligent search in this place, the day after my arrival, for subscribers, and continued it for four days. I succeeded beyond expectation, having got nineteen names of the most wealthy and respectable part of the inhabitants. The industry of Pittsburg is remarkable; every body you see is busy; and as a proof of the prosperity of the place, an eminent lawyer told me that there has not been one suit instituted against a merchant of the town these three years.

* * * *

"Gentlemen here assure me that the road to Chilicothe is impassable on foot by reason of the freshes. I have therefore resolved to navigate myself a small skiff, which I have bought, and named the ORNITHOLOGIST, down to Cincinnati, a distance of five hundred and twenty-eight miles; intending to visit five or six towns that lie in my way. From Cincinnati I will cross over to the opposite shore, and, abandoning my boat, make my way to Lexington, where I expect to be ere your letter can reach that place. Were I to go by Chilicothe, I should miss five towns, as large as it. Some say that I ought not to attempt going down by myself—others think I may. I am determined to make the experiment, the expense of hiring a rower being considerable. As soon as the ice clears out of the Alleghany, and the weather will permit, I shall shove off, having every thing in readiness. I have ransacked the woods and fields here without finding a single bird new to me, or indeed any thing but a few snow-birds and sparrows. I expect to have something interesting to communicate in my next.

* * * *

"My friends will please accept through you my best wishes and kindest respects; and I regret that while the grand spectacle of mountains, regions of expanded forests, glittering towns,

and noble rivers, are passing in rapid succession before my delighted view, they are not beside me to enjoy the varying scenery; but as far as my pen will enable me, I will freely share it with them, and remember *them* affectionately until I forget *myself.*

"February 23d. My baggage is on board—I have just to despatch this and set off. The weather is fine, and I have no doubt of piloting my skiff in safety to Cincinnati. Farewell! God bless you!"

TO MR. ALEXANDER LAWSON.

Lexington, April 4, 1810.

"My Dear Sir,

"Having now reached the *second* stage of my bird-catching expedition, I willingly sit down to give you some account of my adventures and remarks since leaving Pittsburg; by the aid of a good map, and your usual stock of patience, you will be able to listen to my story, and trace all my wanderings. Though generally dissuaded from venturing by myself on so long a voyage down the Ohio, in an open skiff, I considered this mode, with all its inconveniences, as the most favourable to my researches, and the most suitable to my funds, and I determined accordingly. Two days before my departure, the Alleghany river was one wide torrent of broken ice, and I calculated on experiencing considerable difficulties on this score. My stock of provisions consisted of some biscuit and cheese, and a bottle of cordial presented me by a gentleman of Pittsburg; my gun, trunk and great coat, occupied one end of the boat; I had a small tin occasionally to bale her, and to take my beverage from the Ohio with; and bidding adieu to the smoky confines of Pitt, I lanched into the stream, and soon winded away among the hills that every where enclose this noble river. The weather was warm and serene, and the river like a mirror, except where floating masses of ice spotted its surface, and which required some care to steer clear of; but these to my surprise, in less than a day's sailing, totally disappeared. Far

from being concerned at my new situation, I felt my heart expand with joy at the novelties which surrounded me; I listened with pleasure to the whistling of the Red-bird on the banks as I passed, and contemplated the forest scenery as it receded, with increasing delight. The smoke of the numerous sugar camps, rising lazily among the mountains, gave great effect to the varying landscape; and the grotesque log cabins, that here and there opened from the woods, were diminished into mere dog-houses by the sublimity of the impending mountains. If you suppose to yourself two parallel ranges of forest-covered hills, whose irregular summits are seldom more than three or four miles apart, winding through an immense extent of country, and enclosing a river half a mile wide, which alternately washes the steep declivity on one side, and laves a rich flat forest-clad bottom on the other, of a mile or so in breadth, you will have a pretty correct idea of the appearance of the Ohio. The banks of these rich flats are from twenty to sixty and eighty feet high, and even these last were within a few feet of being overflowed in December, 1808.

"I now stripped, with alacrity, to my new avocation. The current went about two and a half miles an hour, and I added about three and a half miles more to the boat's way with my oars. In the course of the day I passed a number of arks, or, as they are usually called, Kentucky boats, loaded with what it must be acknowledged are the most valuable commodities of a country; viz. men, women and children, horses and ploughs, flour, millstones, &c. Several of these floating caravans were loaded with store goods for the supply of the settlements through which they passed, having a counter erected, shawls, muslins, &c. displayed, and every thing ready for transacting business. On approaching a settlement they blow a horn or tin trumpet, which announces to the inhabitants their arrival. I boarded many of these arks, and felt much interested at the sight of so many human beings, migrating like birds of passage to the luxuriant regions of the south and west. The arks are built in the form of a parallelogram, being from twelve to four-

teen feet wide, and from forty to seventy feet long, covered above, rowed only occasionally by two oars before, and steered by a long and powerful one fixed above, as in the annexed sketch.

Ark.

Barge for passing up stream.

" The barges are taken up along shore by setting poles, at the rate of twenty miles or so a day; the arks cost about one hundred and fifty cents per foot, according to their length; and when they reach their places of destination, seldom bring more than one-sixth their original cost. These arks descend from all parts of the Ohio and its tributary streams, the Alleghany, Monongahela, Muskingum, Sciota, Miami, Kentucky, Wabash, &c. in the months of March, April, and May particularly, with goods, produce and emigrants, the two former for markets along the river, or at New Orleans, the latter for various parts of Kentucky, Ohio, and the Indiana Territory. I now return to my own expedition. I rowed twenty odd miles the first spell, and found I should be able to stand it perfectly well. About an hour after night I put up at a miserable cabin, fifty-two miles from Pittsburg, where I slept on what I supposed to be corn-stalks, or something worse; so preferring the smooth bosom of the Ohio to this *brush heap*, I got up long before day, and, being under no apprehension of losing my way, I again pushed out into the stream. The landscape on each side lay in one mass of shade, but the grandeur of the projecting headlands and vanishing points, or lines, was charming-

ly reflected in the smooth glassy surface below. I could only discover when I was passing a clearing, by the crowing of cocks; and now and then, in more solitary places, the big-horned owl made a most hideous hollowing, that echoed among the mountains. In this lonesome manner, with full leisure for observation and reflection, exposed to hardships all day, and hard births all night, to storms of rain, hail and snow, for it froze severely almost every night, I persevered, from the 24th of February to Sunday evening March 17th, when I moored my skiff safely in Bear-Grass Creek, at the Rapids of the Ohio, after a voyage of seven hundred and twenty miles. My hands suffered the most; and it will be some weeks yet before they recover their former feeling and flexibility. It would be the task of a month to detail all the particulars of my numerous excursions, in every direction from the river. In Steubenville, Charlestown and Wheeling, I found some friends. At Marietta I visited the celebrated remains of Indian fortifications, as they are improperly called, which cover a large space of ground on the banks of the Muskingum. Seventy miles above this, at a place called Big-Grave Creek, I examined some extraordinary remains of the same kind there. The Big Grave is three hundred paces round at the base, seventy feet perpendicular, and the top, which is about fifty feet over, has sunk *in*, forming a regular concavity, three or four feet deep. This tumulus is in the form of a cone, and the whole, as well as its immediate neighbourhood, is covered with a venerable growth of forest, four or five hundred years old, which gives it a most singular appearance. In clambering around its steep sides, I found a place where a large white oak had been lately blown down, and had torn up the earth to the depth of five or six feet. In this place I commenced digging, and continued to labour for about an hour, examining every handful of earth with great care, but except some shreds of earthen ware, made of a coarse kind of gritty clay, and considerable pieces of charcoal, I found nothing else; but a person of the neighbourhood presented me with some beads, fashioned out of a kind of white

stone, which were found in digging on the opposite side of this gigantic mound, where I found the hole still remaining. The whole of an extensive plain a short distance from this is marked out with squares, oblongs and circles, one of which comprehends several acres. The embankments by which they are distinguished are still two or three feet above the common level of the field. The Big Grave is the property of a Mr. Tomlinson, or Tumblestone, who lives near, and who would not expend three cents to see the whole sifted before his face. I endeavoured to work on his avarice, by representing the probability that it might contain valuable matters, and suggested to him a mode by which a passage might be cut into it level with the bottom, and by excavation and arching, a most noble cellar might be formed for keeping his turnips and potatoes. "All the turnips and potatoes I shall raise this dozen years," said he, "would not pay the expense." This man is no antiquary, or theoretical farmer, nor much of a practical one either I fear; he has about two thousand acres of the best land, and just makes out to live. Near the head of what is called the Long Reach, I called on a certain Michael Cressap, son to the noted colonel Cressap, mentioned in Jefferson's Notes on Virginia. From him I received the head of a Paddle fish, the largest ever seen in the Ohio, which I am keeping for Mr. Peale, with various other curiosities. I took the liberty of asking whether Logan's accusation of his father having killed *all* his family, had any truth in it; but he replied that it had not. Logan, he said, had been misinformed; he detailed to me all the particulars, which are too long for repetition, and concluded by informing me that his father died early in the revolutionary war, of the camp fever, near New York.

"Marietta stands on a swampy plain, which has evidently once been the ancient bed of the Muskingum, and is still occasionally inundated to the depth of five or six feet. A Mr. Putnam, son to the old general of Bunker's Hill memory, and Mr. Gillman and Mr. Fearing, are making great exertions here, in introducing and multiplying the race of merinos. The two latter

gentlemen are about establishing works by steam, for carding and spinning wool, and intend to carry on the manufacture of broadcloth extensively. Mr. Gillman is a gentleman of taste and wealth, and has no doubts of succeeding. Something is necessary to give animation to this place, for since the building of ships has been abandoned here, the place seems on the decline.

"The current of the Muskingum is very rapid, and the ferry boat is navigated across in the following manner. A strong cable is extended from bank to bank, forty or fifty feet above the surface of the river, and fastened tight at each end. On this cable are two loose running blocks; one rope from the bow of the boat is fastened to the first of these blocks, and another from the after part of the boat to the second block, and by lengthening this last a diagonal direction is given to the boat's head, a little up stream, and the current striking forcibly and obliquely on her aft, she is hurried forward with amazing velocity without any manual labour whatever. I passed Blannerhasset's island after night, but the people were burning brush, and by the light I had a distinct view of the mansion house, which is but a plain frame of no great dimensions. It is now the property of a Mr. Miller from Lexington, who intends laying it chiefly in hemp. It is nearly three miles long, and contains about three hundred acres, half of which is in cultivation; but like all the rest of the numerous islands of the Ohio, is subject to inundations. At Galliopolis, which stands upon a high plain, and contains forty or fifty scattered houses, I found the fields well fenced and well cultivated, peach and apple orchards numerous, and a considerable appearance of industry. One half of the original French settlers have removed to a tract of land opposite to the mouth of Sandy River. This town has one shop and two taverns; the mountains press in to within a short distance of the town. I found here another Indian mound planted with peach trees. On Monday, March 5th, about ten miles below the mouth of the great Sciota, where I saw the first flock of paroquets, I encountered a violent storm of wind and rain, which changed to hail and snow, blowing down trees and limbs

in all directions; so that for immediate preservation I was obliged to steer out into the river, which rolled and foamed like a sea, and filled my boat nearly half full of water; and it was with the greatest difficulty I could make the least headway. It continued to snow violently until dusk, when I at length made good my landing at a place on the Kentucky shore, where I had perceived a cabin; and here I spent the evening in learning the art and mystery of bear-treeing, wolf-trapping, and wild-cat hunting, from an old professor. But notwithstanding the skill of this great master, the country here is swarming with wolves and wild-cats, black and brown; according to this hunter's own confession he had lost sixty pigs since Christmas last; and all night long the distant howling of the wolves kept the dogs in a perpetual uproar of barking. This man was one of those people called squatters, who neither pay rent nor own land, but keep roving on the frontiers, advancing as the tide of civilized population approaches. They are the immediate successors of the savages, and far below them in good sense and good manners, as well as comfortable accommodations. An engraved representation of one of their cabins would form a striking embellishment to the pages of the Port Folio, as a specimen of the *first* order of *American Architecture.*

"Nothing adds more to the savage grandeur, and picturesque effect, of the scenery along the Ohio, than these miserable huts of human beings, lurking at the bottom of a gigantic growth of timber, that I have not seen equalled in any other part of the United States. And it is truly amusing to observe how dear and how familiar habit has rendered those privations, which must have been first the offspring of necessity. Yet none pride themselves more on their possessions. The inhabitants of these forlorn sheds will talk to you with pride of the richness of their soil, of the excellence and abundance of their country, of the healthiness of their climate, and the purity of their waters; while the only bread you find among them is of Indian corn, coarsely ground in a horse-mill, with half of the grains unbroken; even their cattle are destitute of stables and hay,

and look like moving skeletons; their own houses worse than pig-sties; their clothes an assemblage of rags; their faces yellow, and lank with disease; and their persons covered with filth, and frequently garnished with the humours of the Scotch fiddle; from which dreadful disease, by the mercy of God, I have been most miraculously preserved. All this is the effect of laziness. The corn is thrown into the ground in the Spring, and the pigs turned into the woods, where they multiply like rabbits. The labour of the squatter is now over till Autumn, and he spends the Winter in eating pork, cabbage and hoe-cakes. What a contrast to the neat farm, and snug cleanly habitation, of the industrious settler, that opens his green fields, his stately barns, gardens and orchards, to the gladdened eye of the delighted stranger!

"At a place called Salt Lick I went ashore to see the salt works, and to learn whether the people had found any further remains of an animal of the ox kind, one of whose horns, of a prodigious size, was discovered here some years ago, and is in the possession of Mr. Peale. They make here about one thousand bushels weekly, which sells at one dollar and seventy-five cents per bushel. The wells are from thirty to fifty feet deep, but nothing curious has lately been dug up. I landed at Maysville, or Limestone, where a considerable deal of business is done in importation for the interior of Kentucky. It stands on a high narrow plain between the mountains and the river, which is fast devouring the bank, and encroaching on the town; part of the front street is gone already, and unless some effectual means are soon taken, the whole must go by piecemeal. This town contains about one hundred houses, chiefly log and frames. From this place I set out on foot for Washington. On the road, at the height of several hundred feet above the present surface of the river, I found prodigious quantities of petrified shells, of the small cockle and fan-shaped kind, but whether marine remains or not am uncertain. I have since found these petrified concretions of shells universal all over Kentucky, wherever I have been. The rocks look as if one

had collected heaps of broken shells, and wrought them up among clay, then hardened it into stone. These rocks lie universally in horizontal strata. A farmer in the neighbourhood of Washington assured me, that from seven acres he reaped at once eight thousand weight of excellent hemp, fit for market.

"Amidst very tempestuous weather I reached the town of Cincinnati, which does honour to the name of the old Roman, and is the neatest and handsomest situated place I have seen since I left Philadelphia. You must know that during an unknown series of ages, the river Ohio has gradually sunk several hundred feet below its former bed, and has left on both sides, occasionally, what are called the first or nearest, and the second or next, high bank, the latter of which is never overflowed.

"The town of Cincinnati occupies two beautiful plains, one on the first, and the other on the second bank, and contains upwards of five hundred houses, the greater proportion of which are of brick. One block house is all that remains of Fort Washington. The river Licking comes in from the opposite shore, where the town of Newport, of forty or fifty houses, and a large arsenal and barracks, are lately erected. Here I met with judge Turner, a man of extraordinary talents, well known to the literati of Philadelphia. He exerted himself in my behalf with all the ardour of an old friend. A large Indian mound in the vicinity of this town has been lately opened by Doctor Drake, who showed me the collection of curiosities which he had found in that and others. In the centre of this mound he also found a large fragment of earthen ware, such as I found at the Big Grave, which is a pretty strong proof that these works had been erected by a people, if not the same, differing little from the present race of Indians, whose fragments of earthen ware, dug up about their late towns, correspond exactly with these. Twenty miles below this I passed the mouth of the Great Miami, which rushes in from the north, and is a large and stately river, preserving its pure waters uncontaminated for many miles with those of the Ohio, each keeping

their respective sides of the channel. I rambled up the banks of this river for four or five miles, and in my return shot a turkey. I also saw five or six deer in a drove, but they were too light-heeled for me.

"In the afternoon of the 15th I entered Big-Bone Creek, which being passable only about a quarter of a mile, I secured my boat, and left my baggage under the care of a decent family near, and set out on foot five miles through the woods for the Big-Bone Lick, that great antediluvian rendezvous of the American elephants. This place, which lies "far in the windings of a sheltered vale," afforded me a fund of amusement in shooting ducks and paroquets, (of which last I skinned twelve, and brought off two slightly wounded,) and in examining the ancient buffalo roads to this great licking-place. Mr. Colquhoun, the proprietor, was not at home, but his agent and manager entertained me as well as he was able, and was much amused with my enthusiasm. This place is a low valley, everywhere surrounded by high hills; in the centre, by the side of the creek, is a quagmire of near an acre, from which, and another smaller one below, the chief part of these large bones have been taken; at the latter places I found numerous fragments of large bones lying scattered about. In pursuing a wounded duck across this quagmire, I had nearly deposited my carcass among the grand congregation of mammoths below, having sunk up to the middle, and had hard struggling to get out. As the proprietor intends to dig in various places this season for brine, and is a gentleman of education and intelligence, I have strong hopes that a more complete skeleton of that animal called the mammoth, than has yet been found, will be procured. I laid the strongest injunctions on the manager to be on the look out, and to preserve every thing; I also left a letter for Mr. Colquhoun to the same purport, and am persuaded that these will not be neglected. In this neighbourhood I found the Columbo plant in great abundance, and collected some of the seeds. Many of the old stalks were more than five feet high. I have since found it in various other parts of this coun-

try. In the afternoon of the next day I returned to my boat, replaced my baggage, and rowed twenty miles to the Swiss settlement, where I spent the night. These hardy and industrious people have now twelve acres closely and cleanly planted with vines from the Cape of Good Hope. They last year made seven hundred gallons of wine, and expect to make three times as much the ensuing season. Their houses are neat and comfortable, they have orchards of peach and apple trees, besides a great number of figs, cherries, and other fruit trees, of which they are very curious. They are of opinion that this part of the Indiana Territory is as well suited as any part of France to the cultivation of the vine, but the vines they say require different management here from what they were accustomed to in Switzerland. I purchased a bottle of their last vintage, and drank to all your healths as long as it lasted, in going down the river. Seven miles below this I passed the mouth of Kentucky river, which has a formidable appearance. I observed twenty or thirty scattered houses on its upper side, and a few below, many of the former seemingly in a state of decay. It rained on me almost the whole of this day, and I was obliged to row hard and drink healths to keep myself comfortable. My birds' skins were wrapt up in my great coat, and my own skin had to sustain a complete drenching, which, however, had no bad effects. This evening I lodged at the most wretched hovel I had yet seen. The owner, a meagre diminutive wretch, soon began to let me know of how much consequence he had formerly been; that he had gone through all the war with general Washington—had become one of his *life-guards*, and had sent many a British soldier to his long home. As I answered him with indifference, to interest me the more he began to detail anecdotes of his wonderful exploits; "One grenadier," said he, "had the impudence to get up on the works, and to wave his cap in defiance; my commander [general Washington I suppose] says to me, "Dick, says he, can't you pepper that there fellow for me?" says he. "Please your honour, says I, I'll try at it; so I took a fair, cool and

steady aim, and touched my trigger. Up went his heels like a turkey! down he tumbled! one buckshot had entered *here* and another *here*, [laying a finger on each breast] and the bullet found the way to his brains right through his forehead. By God he was a noble looking fellow!" Though I believed every word of this to be a lie, yet I could not but look with disgust on the being who uttered it. This same miscreant pronounced a long prayer before supper, and immediately after called out, in a splutter of oaths, for the pine splinters to be held to let the gentleman see. Such a farrago of lies, oaths, prayers, and politeness, put me in a good humour in spite of myself. The whole herd of this filthy kennel were in perpetual motion with the itch; so having procured a large fire to be made, under pretence of habit I sought for the softest plank, placed my trunk and great coat at my head, and stretched myself there till morning. I set out early and passed several arks. A number of turkies which I observed from time to time on the Indiana shore, made me lose half the morning in search of them. On the Kentucky shore I was also decoyed by the same temptations, but never could approach near enough to shoot one of them. These affairs detained me so, that I was dubious whether I should be able to reach Louisville that night. Night came on, and I could hear nothing of the Falls; about eight I first heard the roaring of the Rapids, and as it increased I was every moment in hopes of seeing the lights of Louisville; but no lights appeared, and the noise seemed now within less than half a mile of me. Seriously alarmed, lest I might be drawn into the suction of the Falls, I cautiously coasted along shore, which was full of *snags* and *sawyers*, and at length, with great satisfaction, opened Bear-Grass Creek, where I secured my skiff to a Kentucky boat, and loading myself with my baggage, I groped my way through a swamp up to the town. The next day I sold my skiff for exactly half what it cost me; and the man who bought it wondered why I gave it such a droll Indian name, (the Ornithologist) "some old chief or warrior I suppose," said he. This day I walked down along

shore to Shippingport, to take a view of these celebrated Rapids, but they fell far short of my expectation. I should have no hesitation in going down them in a skiff. The Falls of Oswego, in the state of New York, though on a smaller scale, are far more dangerous and formidable in appearance. Though the river was not high, I observed two arks and a barge run them with great ease and rapidity. The Ohio here is something more than a mile wide, with several islands interspersed; the channel rocky, and the islands heaped with drift wood. The whole fall in two miles is less than twenty-four feet. The town of Louisville stands on a high *second* bank, and is about as large as Frankford, having a number of good brick buildings and valuable shops. The situation would be as healthy as any on the river, but for the numerous swamps and ponds that intersect the woods in its neighbourhood. These from their height above the river might all be drained and turned into cultivation; but every man here is so intent on the immediate making of money, that they have neither time nor disposition for improvements, even where the article health is at stake. A man here told me that last fall he had fourteen sick in his own family. On Friday the 24th, I left my baggage with a merchant of the place to be forwarded by the first wagon, and set out on foot for Lexington, seventy-two miles distant. I passed through Middletown and Shelbyville, both inconsiderable places. Nine-tenths of the country is in forest; the surface undulating into gentle eminences and declivities, between each of which generally runs a brook, over loose flags of limestone. The soil, by appearance, is of the richest sort. I observed immense fields of Indian corn, high excellent fences, few grain fields, many log houses, and those of the meaner sort. I took notice of few apple orchards, but several very thriving peach ones. An appearance of slovenliness is but too general about their houses, barns, and barn-yards. Negroes are numerous; cattle and horses lean, particularly the former, who appear as if struggling with starvation for their existence. The woods are swarming with pigs, pigeons, squirrels and woodpeckers. The

pigs are universally fat, owing to the great quantity of mast this year. Walking here in wet weather is most execrable, and is like travelling on soft soap; a few days of warm weather hardens this again almost into stone. Want of bridges is the greatest inconvenience to a foot traveller here. Between Shelbyville and Frankfort, having gone out of my way to see a pigeon roost, (which by the by is the greatest curiosity I have seen since leaving home) I waded a deep creek called Benson, nine or ten times. I spent several days in Frankfort, and in rambling among the stupendous cliffs of Kentucky river. On Thursday evening I entered Lexington. But I cannot do justice to these subjects at the conclusion of a letter, which, in spite of all my abridgments, has far exceeded in length what I first intended. My next will be from Nashville. I shall then have seen a large range of Kentucky, and be more able to give you a correct delineation of the country and its inhabitants. In descending the Ohio, I amused myself with a poetical narrative of my expedition, which I have called "*The Pilgrim,*" an extract from which shall close this long and I am afraid tiresome letter."

TO MR. ALEXANDER LAWSON.

Nashville, Tennessee, April 28th, 1810.

"My dear Sir,

"Before setting out on my journey through the wilderness to Natchez, I sit down to give you, according to promise, some account of Lexington, and of my adventures through the state of Kentucky. These I shall be obliged to sketch as rapidly as possible. Neither my time nor my situation enables me to detail particulars with any degree of regularity; and you must condescend to receive them in the same random manner in which they occur, altogether destitute of fanciful embellishment; with nothing but their novelty, and the simplicity of truth, to recommend them.

"I saw nothing of Lexington till I had approached within half a mile of the place, when the woods opening, I beheld the

town before me, on an irregular plain, ornamented with a small white spire, and consisting of several parallel streets, crossed by some others; many of the houses built of brick; others of frame, neatly painted; but a great proportion wore a more humble and inferior appearance. The fields around looked clean and well fenced; gently undulating, but no hills in view. In a hollow between two of these parallel streets, ran a considerable brook, that, uniting with a larger a little below the town, drives several mills. A large quarry of excellent building stone also attracted my notice as I entered the town. The main street was paved with large masses from this quarry, the foot path neat, and guarded by wooden posts. The numerous shops piled with goods, and the many well dressed females I passed in the streets; the sound of social industry, and the gay scenery of "the busy haunts of men," had a most exhilarating effect on my spirits, after being so long immured in the forest. My own appearance, I believe, was to many equally interesting; and the shopkeepers and other loungers interrogated me with their eyes as I passed, with symptoms of eager and inquisitive curiosity. After fixing my quarters, disposing of my arms, and burnishing myself a little, I walked out to have a more particular view of the place.

"This little metropolis of the western country is nearly as large as Lancaster in Pennsylvania. In the centre of the town is a public square, partly occupied by the court-house and market place, and distinguished by the additional ornament of the pillory and stocks. The former of these is so constructed as to serve well enough, if need be, occasionally for a gallows, which is not a bad thought; for as nothing contributes more to make *hardened villains* than the pillory, so nothing so effectually rids society of them as the gallows; and every knave may here exclaim,

"My *bane* and *antidote* are both before me."

I peeped into the court-house as I passed, and though it was court day, I was struck with the appearance its interior exhi-

bited; for, though only a plain square brick building, it has all the gloom of the Gothic, so much admired of late, by our modern architects. The exterior walls, having, on experiment, been found too feeble for the superincumbent honours of the roof and steeple, it was found necessary to erect, from the floor, a number of large, circular, and unplastered brick pillars, in a new order of architecture, (the thick end uppermost,) which, while they serve to impress the spectators with the perpetual dread that they will tumble about their ears, contribute also, by their number and bulk, to shut out the light, and to spread around a reverential gloom, producing a melancholy and chilling effect; a very good disposition of mind, certainly, for a man to enter a court of justice in. One or two solitary individuals stole along the damp and silent floor; and I could just descry, elevated at the opposite extremity of the building, the judges sitting, like spiders in a window corner, dimly distinguishable through the intermediate gloom. The market place, which stands a little to the westward of this, and stretches over the whole breadth of the square, is built of brick, something like that of Philadelphia, but is unpaved and unfinished. In wet weather you sink over the shoes in mud at every step; and here again the wisdom of the police is manifest; as nobody at such times will wade in there unless forced by business or absolute necessity; by which means a great number of idle loungers are, very properly, kept out of the way of the market folks.

"I shall say nothing of the nature or quantity of the commodities which I saw exhibited there for sale, as the season was unfavourable to a display of their productions; otherwise something better than a few cakes of black maple sugar, wrapt up in greasy saddle-bags, some cabbage, chewing tobacco, catmint and turnip tops, a few bags of meal, sassafras-roots, and skinned squirrels cut up into quarters—something better than all this, I say, in the proper season, certainly covers the stalls of

this market place, in the metropolis of the fertile country of Kentucky.*

* This letter, it should seem, gave offence to some of the inhabitants of Lexington; and a gentleman residing in that town, solicitous about its reputation, undertook, in a letter to the editor of the Port Folio, to vindicate it from strictures which he plainly insinuated were the offspring of ignorance, and unsupported by fact.

After a feeble attempt at sarcasm and irony, the letter-writer thus proceeds: "I have too great a respect for Mr. Wilson, as your friend, not to believe he had in mind some other market house than that of Lexington, when he speaks of it as 'unpaved and unfinished!' But the people of Lexington would be gratified to learn what your ornithologist means by 'skinned squirrels cut up into quarters,' which curious anatomical preparations he enumerates among the articles he saw in the Lexington market. Does Mr. Wilson mean to *joke* upon us? If this is wit we must confess that, however abundant our country may be in good substantial matter-of-fact salt, the attic tart is unknown among us.

"I hope, however, soon to see this gentleman's American Ornithology. Its elegance of execution, and descriptive propriety, may assuage the little pique we have taken from the author."

The editor of the Port Folio having transmitted this letter to Wilson, previous to sending it to press, it was returned with the following note:

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE PORT FOLIO.

Bartram's Gardens, July 16, 1811.

"Dear Sir,

"No man can have a more respectful opinion of the people of Kentucky, particularly those of Lexington, than myself; because I have traversed nearly the whole extent of their country, and witnessed the effects of their bravery, their active industry, and daring spirit for enterprise. But they would be gods, and not men, were they *faultless*.

"I am sorry that truth will not permit me to retract, as mere *jokes*, the few disagreeable things alluded to. I certainly had no other market place in view, than that of Lexington, in the passage above mentioned. As to the circumstance of 'skinned squirrels, cut up into *quarters*,' which seems to have excited so much sensibility, I candidly acknowledge myself to have been incorrect in that statement, and I owe an apology for the same. On referring to my notes taken at the time, I find the word '*halves*,' not quarters; that is, those 'curious anatomical preparations,' (skinned squirrels) were brought to market in the form of a saddle of venison; not in that of a leg or shoulder of mutton.

"With this correction, I beg leave to assure your very sensible corres-

"The horses of Kentucky are the hardiest in the world, not so much by nature as by education and habit. From the commencement of their existence they are habituated to every extreme of starvation and gluttony, idleness and excessive fatigue. In Summer they fare sumptuously every day. In Winter, when not a blade of grass is to be seen, and when the cows have deprived them of the very bark and buds of every fallen tree, they are ridden into town, fifteen or twenty miles, through roads and sloughs that would become the graves of any common animal, with a fury and celerity incomprehensible by you folks on the other side of the Alleghany. They are there fastened to the posts on the sides of the streets, and around the public square, where hundreds of them may be seen, on a court day, hanging their heads from morning to night, in deep cogitation, ruminating perhaps on the long expected return of spring and green herbage. The country people, to their credit be it spoken, are universally clad in plain homespun; soap, however, appears to be a scarce article; and Hopkins's *double cutters* would find here a rich harvest, and produce a very improving effect. Though religion here has its zealous votaries; yet none can accuse the inhabitants of this flourishing place of bigotry, in shutting out from the pale of the church or church yard any human being, or animal whatever. *Some* of these sanctuaries are open at all hours, and to every visiter. The birds of heaven find a hundred passages through the broken panes; and the cows and hogs a ready access on all sides. The wall of separation is broken down between the living and the dead; and dogs tug at the carcass of the horse, on the grave of his master. Lexington, however, with all its faults, which a few years will gradually correct, is an honourable monument of the en-

pondent, that the thing itself was no *joke*, nor meant for one; but, like all the rest of the particulars of that sketch, 'good substantial matter of fact.'

"If these explanations, or the perusal of my American Ornithology, should assuage the 'little pique' in the minds of the good people of Lexington, it will be no less honourable to their own good sense, than agreeable to your humble servant." &c. *Port Folio for August*, 1811.

terprise, courage and industry of its inhabitants. Within the memory of a middle aged man, who gave me the information, there were only two log huts on the spot where this city is now erected; while the surrounding country was a wilderness, rendered hideous by skulking bands of bloody and ferocious Indians. Now numerous excellent institutions for the education of youth, a public library, and a well endowed university, under the superintendence of men of learning and piety, are in successful operation. Trade and manufactures are also rapidly increasing. Two manufactories for spinning cotton have lately been erected; one for woollen; several extensive ones for weaving sail cloth and bagging; and seven ropewalks, which, according to one of the proprietors, export, annually, ropeyarn to the amount of 150,000 dollars. A taste for neat, and even elegant, buildings is fast gaining ground; and Lexington, at present, can boast of men who do honour to science, and of females whose beauty and amiable manners would grace the first circles of society. On Saturday, April 14th, I left this place for Nashville, distant about 200 miles. I passed through Nicholasville, the capital of Jessamine county, a small village begun about ten years ago, consisting of about twenty houses, with three shops and four taverns. The woods were scarcely beginning to look green, which to me was surprising, having been led by common report to believe, that spring here is much earlier than in the lower parts of Pennsylvania. I must further observe, that instead of finding the woods of Kentucky covered with a profusion of flowers, they were, at this time, covered with rotten leaves and dead timber, in every stage of decay and confusion; and I could see no difference between them and our own, but in the magnitude of the timber, and superior richness of the soil. Here and there the white blossoms of the *Sanguinaria canadensis*, or red root, were peeping through the withered leaves: and the buds of the buckeye, or horse chesnut, and one or two more, were beginning to expand. Wherever the hackberry had fallen, or been cut down, the cat-

tle had eaten the whole bark from the trunk, even to that of the roots.

"Nineteen miles from Lexington I descended a long, steep and rocky declivity, to the banks of Kentucky river, which is here about as wide as the Schuylkill; and winds away between prodigious perpendicular cliffs of solid limestone. In this deep and romantic valley the sound of the boat horns, from several Kentucky arks, which were at that instant passing, produced a most charming effect. The river, I was told, had already fallen fifteen feet; but was still high. I observed great numbers of uncommon plants and flowers, growing among the cliffs; and a few solitary bank swallows were skimming along the surface. Reascending from this, and travelling for a few miles, I again descended a vast depth to another stream called Dick's river, engulfed among the same perpendicular masses of rock. Though it was nearly dark I found some curious petrifactions, and some beautiful specimens of mother of pearl on the shore. The roaring of a mill-dam, and the rattling of the mill, prevented the ferryman from hearing me till it was quite night; and I passed the rest of the road in the dark, over a rocky country, abounding with springs, to Danville. This place stands on a slight eminence, and contains about eighty houses, chiefly log and frame buildings, disposed in two parallel streets, crossed by several others. It has two ropewalks and a woollen manufactory; also nine shops and three taverns. I observed a great many sheep feeding about here, amidst fields of excellent pasture. It is, however, but a dull place. A Roman Catholic chapel has been erected here, at the expense of one or two individuals. The shopkeepers trade from the mouth of Dick's river down to New Orleans, with the common productions of the country, flour, hemp, tobacco, pork, corn, and whiskey. I was now one hundred and eighty miles from Nashville, and, as I was informed, not a town or village on the whole route. Every day, however, was producing wonders in the woods, by the progress of vegetation. The blossoms of the sassafras, dogwood, and red bud, contrasted with the deep green of the pop-

lar and buckeye, enriched the scenery on every side; while the voices of the feathered tribes, many of which were to me new and unknown, were continually engaging me in the pursuit. Emerging from the deep solitude of the forest, the rich green of the grain fields, the farm house and cabins embosomed amidst orchards of glowing purple and white, gave the sweetest relief to the eye. Not far from the foot of a high mountain, called Mulders Hill, I overtook one of those family caravans so common in this country, moving to the westward. The procession occupied a length of road, and had a formidable appearance, though, as I afterwards understood, it was composed of the individuals of only a single family. In the front went a wagon drawn by four horses, driven by a negro, and filled with implements of agriculture; another heavy loaded wagon, with six horses, followed, attended by two persons; after which came a numerous and mingled group of horses, steers, cows, sheep, hogs, and calves with their bells; next followed eight boys mounted double, also a negro wench with a white child before her; then the mother with one child behind her, and another at the breast; ten or twelve colts brought up the rear, now and then picking herbage, and trotting ahead. The father, a fresh good looking man, informed me, that he was from Washington county in Kentucky, and was going as far as Cumberland river; he had two ropes fixed to the top of the wagon, one of which he guided himself, and the other was entrusted to his eldest son, to keep it from oversetting in ascending the mountain. The singular appearance of this moving group, the mingled music of the bells, and the shoutings of the drivers, mixed with the echoes of the mountains, joined to the picturesque solitude of the place, and various reflections that hurried through my mind, interested me greatly; and I kept company with them for some time, to lend my assistance if necessary. The country now became mountainous, perpetually ascending and descending; and about forty-nine miles from Danville I passed through a pigeon roost, or rather breeding place, which continued for three miles, and, from information

extended in length for more than forty miles. The timber was chiefly beech; every tree was loaded with nests, and I counted, in different places, more than ninety nests on a single tree. Beyond this I passed a large company of people engaged in erecting a horse-mill for grinding grain. The few cabins I passed were generally poor; but much superior in appearance to those I met with on the shores of the Ohio. In the evening I lodged near the banks of Green river. This stream, like all the rest, is sunk in a deep gulf, between high perpendicular walls of limestone; is about thirty yards wide at this place, and runs with great rapidity; but, as it had fallen considerably, I was just able to ford it without swimming. The water was of a pale greenish colour, like that of the Licking, and some other streams, from which circumstance I suppose it has its name. The rocky banks of this river are hollowed out in many places into caves of enormous size, and of great extent. These rocks abound with the same masses of petrified shells so universal in Kentucky. In the woods, a little beyond this, I met a soldier, on foot, from New Orleans, who had been robbed and plundered by the Choctaws as he passed through their nation. "Thirteen or fourteen Indians," said he, "surrounded me before I was aware, cut away my canteen, tore off my hat, took the handkerchief from my neck, and the shoes from my feet, and all the money I had from me, which was about forty-five dollars." Such was his story. He was going to Chilicothe, and seemed pretty nearly *done up*. In the afternoon I crossed another stream of about twenty-five yards in width, called Little Barren; after which the country began to assume a new and very singular appearance. The woods, which had hitherto been stately, now degenerated into mere scrubby saplings, on which not a bud was beginning to unfold, and grew so open that I could see for a mile through them. No dead timber or rotting leaves were to be seen, but the whole face of the ground was covered with rich verdure, interspersed with a variety of very beautiful flowers, altogether new to me. It seemed as if the whole country had once been one general level; but that

from some unknown cause, the ground had been *undermined*, and had *fallen in*, in innumerable places, forming regular, funnel-shaped, concavities of all dimensions, from twenty feet in diameter, and six feet in depth, to five hundred by fifty, the surface or verdure generally unbroken. In some tracts the surface was entirely destitute of trees, and the eye was presented with nothing but one general neighbourhood of these concavities, or, as they are usually called, sink-holes. At the centre, or bottom of some of these, openings had been made for water. In several places these holes had broken in, on the sides, and even middle of the road, to an unknown depth; presenting their grim mouths as if to swallow up the unwary traveller. At the bottom of one of those declivities, at least fifty feet below the general level, a large rivulet of pure water issued at once from the mouth of a cave about twelve feet wide and seven high. A number of very singular sweet smelling lichens grew over the entrance, and a pewee had fixed her nest, like a little sentry-box, on a projecting shelf of the rock above the water. The height and dimensions of the cave continued the same as far as I waded in, which might be thirty or forty yards, but the darkness became so great that I was forced to return. I observed numbers of small fish sporting about, and I doubt not but these abound even in its utmost subterranean recesses. The whole of this country from Green to Red river, is hollowed out into these enormous caves, one of which, lately discovered in Warren county, about eight miles from the Dripping Spring, has been explored for upwards of six miles, extending under the bed of the Green river. The entrance to these caves generally commences at the bottom of a sinkhole; and many of them are used by the inhabitants as cellars or spring-houses, having generally a spring or brook of clear water running through them. I descended into one of these belonging to a Mr. Wood, accompanied by the proprietor, who carried the light. At first the darkness was so intense that I could scarcely see a few feet beyond the circumference of the candle; but, after being in for five or six minutes, the

objects around me began to make their appearance more distinctly. The bottom, for fifteen or twenty yards at first, was so irregular, that we had constantly to climb over large masses of wet and slippery rocks; the roof rose in many places to the height of twenty or thirty feet, presenting all the most irregular projections of surface, and hanging in gloomy and silent horror. We passed numerous chambers, or offsetts, which we did not explore; and after three hours wandering in these profound regions of glooms and silence, the particulars of which would detain me too long, I emerged with a handkerchief filled with bats, including one which I have never seen described; and a number of extraordinary insects of the Gryllus tribe, with antennæ upwards of six inches long, and which I am persuaded had never before seen the light of day, as they fled from it with seeming terror, and I believe were as blind in it as their companions the bats. Great quantities of native glauber salts are found in these caves, and are used by the country people in the same manner, and with equal effect, as those of the shops. But the principal production is saltpetre, which is procured from the earth in great abundance. The cave in Warren county abovementioned, has lately been sold for three thousand dollars, to a saltpetre company, an individual of which informed me that, from every appearance, this cave had been known to the Indians many ages ago; and had evidently been used for the same purposes. At the distance of more than a mile from the entrance, the exploring party, on their first visit, found the roof blackened by smoke, and bundles of half burnt canes scattered about. A bark mockasin, of curious construction, besides several other Indian articles, were found among the rubbish. The earth, also, lay piled in heaps, with great regularity, as if in preparation for extracting the saltpetre.

"Notwithstanding the miserable appearance of the timber on these barrens, the soil, to my astonishment, produced the most luxuriant fields of corn and wheat I had ever before met with. But one great disadvantage is the want of water, for

the whole running streams, with which the surface of this country evidently once abounded, have been drained off to a great depth, and now murmur among these lower regions, secluded from the day. One forenoon I rode nineteen miles without seeing water; while my faithful horse looked round, but in vain, at every hollow, with a wishful and languishing eye, for that precious element. These barrens furnished me with excellent sport in shooting grous, which abound here in great numbers; and in the delightful groves that here and there rise majestically from these plains, I found many new subjects for my Ornithology. I observed all this day, far to the right, a range of high rocky detached hills, or knobs, as they are called, that skirt the barrens, as if they had been once the boundaries of the great lake that formerly covered this vast plain. These, I was told, abound with stone coal and copperas. I crossed Big Barren river in a ferry boat, where it was about one hundred yards wide; and passed a small village called Bowling Green, near which I rode my horse up to the summit of one of these high insulated rocky hills, or knobs, which overlooked an immense circumference of country, spreading around bare and leafless, except where the groves appeared, in which there is usually water. Fifteen miles from this, induced by the novel character of the country, I put up for several days, at the house of a pious and worthy presbyterian, whence I made excursions, in all directions, through the surrounding country. Between this and Red river the country had a bare and desolate appearance. Caves continued to be numerous; and report made some of them places of concealment for the dead bodies of certain strangers who had disappeared there. One of these lies near the banks of the Red river, and belongs to a person of the name of ————, a man of notoriously bad character, and strongly suspected, even by his neighbours, of having committed a foul murder of this kind, which was related to me with all its minutiæ of horrors. As this man's house stands by the road side, I was induced, by motives of curiosity, to stop and take a peep of him. On my

arrival I found two persons in conversation under the piazza, one of whom informed me that he was the landlord. He was a dark mulatto, rather above the common size, inclining to corpulency, with legs small in proportion to his size, and walked lame. His countenance bespoke a soul capable of deeds of darkness. I had not been three minutes in company when he invited the other man, (who I understood was a traveller) and myself, to walk back and see his cave, to which I immediately consented. The entrance is in the perpendicular front of a rock, behind the house; has a door with a lock and key to it, and was crowded with pots of milk, placed near the running stream. The roof and sides of solid rock, were wet and dropping with water. Desiring ———— to walk before with the lights, I followed with my hand on my pistol, reconnoitering on every side, and listening to his description of its length and extent. After examining this horrible vault for forty or fifty yards, he declined going any farther, complaining of a rheumatism; and I now first perceived that the other person had staid behind, and that we two were alone together. Confident in my means of self-defence, whatever mischief the devil might suggest to him, I fixed my eye steadily on his, and observed to him, that he could not be ignorant of the reports circulated about the country relative to this cave. "I suppose," said I, "you know what I mean?" "Yes, I understand you," returned he, without appearing the least embarrassed, "that I killed somebody and threw them into this cave—I can tell you the whole beginning of that damned lie," said he; and, without moving from the spot, he detailed to me a long story, which would fill half my letter, to little purpose, and which, with other particulars, I shall reserve for your amusement when we meet. I asked him why he did not get the cave examined by three or four reputable neighbours, whose report might rescue his character from the suspicion of having committed so horrid a crime. He acknowledged it would be well enough to do so: but did not seem to think it worth the trouble; and we returned as we advanced, ———— walking before with the lights.

Whether this man be guilty or not of the transaction laid to his charge I know not; but his manners and aspect are such as by no means to allay suspicion.

"After crossing Red river, which is here scarce twenty yards broad, I found no more barrens. The timber was large, and the woods fast thickening with green leaves. As I entered the state of Tennessee, the face of the country became hilly, and even mountainous. After descending an immense declivity, and coursing along the rich valley of Manskers creek, where I again met with large flocks of paroquets, I stopt at a small tavern, to examine, for three or four days, this part of the country. Here I made some interesting additions to my stock of new subjects for the Ornithology. On the fourth day I crossed the Cumberland, where it is about two hundred and fifty yards wide, and of great depth, bounded as usual with high precipitous banks, and reached the town of Nashville, which towers like a fortress above the river. Here I have been busily employed these eight days; and send you the enclosed parcel of drawings, the result of every moment of leisure and convenience I could obtain. Many of the birds are altogether new; and you will find along with them every explanation necessary for your purpose.

"You may rest assured of hearing from me by the first opportunity after my arrival at Natchez. In the meantime I receive with much pleasure the accounts you give me of the kind inquiries of my friends. To me nothing could be more welcome; for whether journeying in this world, or journeying to that which is to come, there is something of desolation and despair in the idea of being forever forgotten in our absence, by those whom we sincerely esteem and regard."

TO MR. ALEXANDER LAWSON.

Natchez, Mississippi Territory, May 18th, 1810.

"Dear Sir,

"About three weeks ago I wrote to you from Nashville, enclosing three sheets of drawings, which I hope you have re-

ceived.* I was at that time on the point of setting out for St. Louis; but being detained a week by constant and heavy rains, and considering that it would add four hundred miles to my journey, and detain me at least a month; and the season being already far advanced, and no subscribers to be expected there, I abandoned the idea, and prepared for a journey through the wilderness. I was advised by many not to attempt it alone; that the Indians were dangerous, the swamps and rivers almost impassable without assistance, and a thousand other hobgoblins were conjured up to dissuade me from going *alone*. But I weighed all these matters in my own mind; and attributing a great deal of this to vulgar fears and exaggerated reports, I equipt myself for the attempt. I rode an excellent horse, on which I could depend; I had a loaded pistol in each pocket, a loaded fowling piece belted across my shoulder, a pound of gunpowder in my flask, and five pounds of shot in my belt. I bought some biscuit and dried beef, and on Friday morning, May 4th, I left Nashville. About half a mile from town I observed a poor negro with *two* wooden legs, building himself a cabin in the woods. Supposing that this journey might afford you and my friends some amusement, I kept a particular account of the various occurrences, and shall transcribe some of the most interesting, omitting every thing relative to my Ornithological excursions and discoveries, as more suitable for another occasion. Eleven miles from Nashville I came to the Great Harpath, a stream of about fifty yards wide, which was running with great violence. I could not discover the entrance of the ford, owing to the rains and inundations. There was no time to be lost, I plunged in, and almost immediately my horse was swimming. I set his head aslant the current, and being strong, he soon landed me on the other side. As the weather was warm, I rode in my wet clothes without any inconvenience. The country to-day was a perpetual succession of steep hills and low bottoms; I crossed ten or twelve large creeks, one of which I swam with my horse, where he

* These drawings never came to hand.

was near being entangled among some bad drift wood. Now and then a solitary farm opened from the woods, where the negro children were running naked about the yards. I also passed along the north side of a high hill, where the whole timber had been prostrated by some terrible hurricane. I lodged this night in a miner's, who told me he had been engaged in forming no less than thirteen companies for hunting mines, all of whom had left him. I advised him to follow his farm, as the surest vein of ore he could work. Next day (Saturday) I first observed the cane growing, which increased until the whole woods were full of it. The road this day winded along the high ridges of mountains that divide the waters of the Cumberland from those of the Tennessee. I passed few houses today; but met several parties of boatmen returning from Natchez and New Orleans; who gave me such an account of the road, and the difficulties they had met with, as served to stiffen my resolution to be prepared for every thing. These men were as dirty as Hottentots; their dress a shirt and trowsers of canvass, black, greasy, and sometimes in tatters; the skin burnt wherever exposed to the sun; each with a budget, wrapt up in an old blanket; their beards, eighteen days old, added to the singularity of their appearance, which was altogether savage. These people came from the various tributary streams of the Ohio, hired at forty or fifty dollars a trip, to return back on their own expenses. Some had upwards of eight hundred miles to travel. When they come to a stream that is unfordable, they coast it for a fallen tree: if that cannot be had, they enter with their budget on their head, and when they lose bottom, drop it on their shoulders, and take to swimming. They have sometimes fourteen or fifteen of such streams to pass in a day, and morasses of several miles in length, that I have never seen equalled in any country. I lodged this night at one Dobbins's, where ten or twelve of these men lay on the floor. As they scrambled up in the morning, they very generally complained of being unwell, for which they gave an odd reason, lying *within doors*, it being the first of fifteen nights

they had been so indulged. Next morning (Sunday) I rode six miles to a man's, of the name of Grinder, where our poor friend Lewis perished.* In the same room where he expired, I took down from Mrs. Grinder the particulars of that melancholy event, which affected me extremely. This house or cabin is seventy-two miles from Nashville, and is the last white man's as you enter the Indian country. Governor Lewis, she said, came hither about sunset, alone, and inquired if he could stay for the night; and, alighting, brought his saddle into the house. He was dressed in a loose gown, white, striped with blue. On being asked if he came alone, he replied that there were two servants behind, who would soon be up. He called for some spirits, and drank a very little. When the servants arrived, one of whom was a negro, he inquired for his powder, saying he was sure he had some powder in a canister. The servant gave no distinct reply, and Lewis, in the mean while, walked backwards and forwards before the door, talking to himself. Sometimes, she said, he would seem as if he were walking up to her; and would suddenly wheel round, and walk back as fast as he could. Supper being ready he sat down, but had eaten only a few mouthfuls when he started up, speaking to himself in a violent manner. At these times, she says, she observed his face to flush as if it had come on him in a fit. He lighted his pipe, and drawing a chair to the door sat down, saying to Mrs. Grinder, in a kind tone of voice, "Madam, this is a very pleasant evening." He smoked for some time, but quitted his seat and traversed the yard as before. He again sat down to his pipe, seemed again composed, and casting his eyes wistfully towards the west, observed what a sweet evening it was. Mrs. Grinder was preparing a bed for him;

* It is hardly necessary to state, that this was the brave and enterprising traveller, whose journey across the Rocky Mountains, to the Pacific Ocean, has obtained for him well-merited celebrity. The *true* cause of his committing the rash deed, so feelingly detailed above, is not yet known to the public; but his friends will not soon forget the base imputations and cruel neglect, which the honourable mind of the gallant soldier knew not how to brook.

but he said he would sleep on the floor, and desired the servant to bring the bear skins and buffalo robe, which were immediately spread out for him; and it being now dusk the woman went off to the kitchen, and the two men to the barn, which stands about two hundred yards off. The kitchen is only a few paces from the room where Lewis was, and the woman being considerably alarmed by the behaviour of her guest could not sleep, but listened to him walking backwards and forwards, she thinks, for several hours, and talking aloud, as she said, "like a lawyer." She then heard the report of a pistol, and something fall heavily on the floor, and the words "*O Lord!*" Immediately afterwards she heard another pistol, and in a few minutes she heard him at her door calling out "*O madam! give me some water, and heal my wounds.*" The logs being open, and unplastered, she saw him stagger back and fall against a stump that stands between the kitchen and room. He crawled for some distance, and raised himself by the side of a tree, where he sat about a minute. He once more got to the room; afterwards he came to the kitchen door, but did not speak; she then heard him scraping the bucket with a gourd for water; but it appears that this cooling element was denied the dying man! As soon as day broke and not before, the terror of the woman having permitted him to remain for two hours in this most deplorable situation, she sent two of her children to the barn, her husband not being at home, to bring the servants; and on going in they found him lying on the bed; he uncovered his side, and showed them where the bullet had entered; a piece of the forehead was blown off, and had exposed the brains, without having bled much. He begged they would take his rifle and blow out his brains, and he would give them all the money he had in his trunk. He often said, "I am no coward; but I am *so* strong, *so hard to die.*" He begged the servant not to be afraid of him, for that he would not hurt him. He expired in about two hours, or just as the sun rose above the trees. He lies buried close by the common path, with a few loose rails thrown over his grave. I gave

Grinder money to put a post fence round it, to shelter it from the hogs, and from the wolves; and he gave me his written promise he would do it. I left this place in a very melancholy mood, which was not much allayed by the prospect of the gloomy and savage wilderness which I was just entering alone.

* * * *

"I was roused from this melancholy reverie by the roaring of Buffalo river, which I forded with considerable difficulty. I passed two or three solitary Indian huts in the course of the day, with a few acres of open land at each; but so wretchedly cultivated, that they just make out to raise maize enough to keep in existence. They pointed me out the distances by holding up their fingers. This is the country of the Chickasaws, though erroneously laid down in some maps as that of the Cherokees. I slept this night in one of their huts; the Indians spread a deer skin for me on the floor, I made a pillow of my portmanteau, and slept tolerably well; an old Indian laid himself down near me. On Monday morning I rode fifteen miles, and stopt at an Indian's to feed my horse. The sight of my paroquet brought the whole family around me. The women are generally naked from the middle upwards; and their heads, in many instances, being rarely combed, look like a large mop; they have a yard or two of blue cloth wrapt round by way of petticoat, that reaches to their knees—the boys were generally naked; except a kind of bag of blue cloth, by way of *fig-leaf.* Some of the women have a short jacket, with sleeves, drawn over their naked body, and the rag of a blanket is a general appendage. I met to-day two officers of the United States army, who gave me a better account of the road than I had received. I passed through many bad swamps to-day; and at about five in the evening came to the banks of the Tennessee, which was swelled by the rains, and is about half a mile wide thirty miles below the Muscle shoals, and just below a long island laid down in your small map. A growth of canes, of twenty and thirty feet high, covers the low bottoms; and these cane swamps are the gloomiest and most deso-

late looking places imaginable. I hailed for the boat as long as it was light, without effect; I then sought out a place to encamp, kindled a large fire, stript the canes for my horse, eat a bit of supper, and lay down to sleep; listening to the owls, and the *Chuck-Wills-Widow*, a kind of *Whip-poor-Will*, that is very numerous here. I got up several times during the night to recruit my fire, and see how my horse did; and, but for the gnats, would have slept tolerably well. These gigantic woods have a singular effect by the light of a large fire; the whole scene being circumscribed by impenetrable darkness, except that in front, where every leaf is strongly defined, and deeply shaded. In the morning I hunted until about six, when I again renewed my shoutings for the boat, and it was not until near eleven that it made its appearance. I was so enraged at this delay, that, had I not been cumbered with baggage, I believe I should have ventured to swim the river. I vented my indignation on the owner of the boat, who is a half-breed, threatening to publish him in the papers, and advise every traveller I met to take the upper-ferry. This man charges one dollar for man and horse, and thinks, because he is a chief, he may do in this way what he pleases. The country now assumed a new appearance; no brushwood—no fallen or rotten timber; one could see a mile through the woods, which were covered with high grass fit for mowing. These woods are burnt every spring, and thus are kept so remarkably clean, that they look like the most elegant noblemen's parks. A profusion of flowers, altogether new to me, and some of them very elegant, presented themselves to my view as I rode along. This must be a heavenly place for the botanist. The most observable of these flowers was a kind of Sweet William, of all tints, from white, to the deepest crimson. A superb Thistle, the most beautiful I had ever seen. A species of Passion flower, very beautiful. A stately plant of the Sunflower family—the button of the deepest orange, and the radiating petals bright carmine, the breadth of the flower about four inches. A large white flower like a deer's tail. Great quantities of the Sensi-

tive plant, that shrunk instantly on being touched, covered the ground in some places. Almost every flower was new to me, except the Carolina Pink-root, and Columbo, which grew in abundance on every side. At Bear creek, which is a large and rapid stream, I first observed the Indian boys with their *blow-guns.* These are tubes of cane seven feet long, and perfectly straight, when well made. The arrows are made of slender slips of cane, twisted, and straightened before the fire, and covered for several inches at one end with the down of thistles, in a spiral form, so as just to enter the tube. By a puff they can send these with such violence as to enter the body of a partridge, twenty yards off. I set several of them a hunting birds by promises of reward, but not one of them could succeed. I also tried some of the blow-guns myself, but found them generally defective in straightness. I met six parties of boatmen to-day, and many straggling Indians, and encamped about sunset near a small brook, where I shot a turkey, and on returning to my fire found four boatmen, who stayed with me all night, and helped to pick the bones of the turkey. In the morning I heard the turkies gobbling all round me, but not wishing to leave my horse, having no great faith in my guests' honesty, I proceeded on my journey. This day (Wednesday) I passed through the most horrid swamps I had ever seen. These are covered with a prodigious growth of canes, and high woods, which together, shut out almost the whole light of day for miles. The banks of the deep and sluggish creeks, that occupy the centre, are precipitous, where I had often to plunge my horse seven feet down, into a bed of deep clay up to his belly; from which nothing but great strength and exertion could have rescued him; the opposite shore was equally bad, and beggars all description. For an extent of several miles, on both sides of these creeks, the darkness of night obscures every object around. On emerging from one of the worst of these, I met General Wade Hampton, with two servants, and a pack-horse, going, as he said, towards Nashville. I told him of the mud campaign immediately be-

fore him; I was covered with mire and wet, and I thought he looked somewhat serious at the difficulties he was about to engage. He has been very sick lately. About half an hour before sunset, being within sight of the Indian's where I intended to lodge, the evening being perfectly clear and calm, I laid the reins on my horse's neck, to listen to a Mocking-bird, the first I had heard in the Western country, which, perched on the top of a dead tree before the door, was pouring out a torrent of melody. I think I never heard so excellent a performer. I had alighted, and was fastening my horse, when hearing the report of a rifle immediately beside me, I looked up and saw the poor Mocking-bird fluttering to the ground. One of the savages had marked his elevation, and barbarously shot him. I hastened over into the yard, and walking up to him, told him that was bad, very bad! That this poor bird had come from a far distant country to sing to him, and that in return he had cruelly killed him. I told him the Great Spirit was offended at such cruelty, and that he would lose many a deer for doing so. The old Indian, father-in-law to the bird-killer, understanding by the negro interpreter what I said, replied, that when these birds come singing and making a noise all day near the house, *somebody will surely die*—which is exactly what an old superstitious German, near Hampton in Virginia, once told me. This fellow had married the two eldest daughters of the old Indian, and presented one of them with the bird he had killed. The next day I passed through the Chickasaw *Big-town*, which stands on the high open plain, that extends through their country, three or four miles in breadth, by fifteen in length. Here and there you perceive little groups of miserable huts, formed of saplings, and plastered with mud and clay; about these are generally a few peach and plum trees. Many ruins of others stand scattered about, and I question whether there were twenty inhabited huts within the whole range of view. The ground was red with strawberries; and the boatmen were seen in straggling parties feasting on them. Now and then a solitary Indian, wrapt in his blanket, passed

sullen and silent. On this plain are beds of shells, of a large species of clam, some of which are almost entire. I this day stopt at the house of a white man, who had two Indian wives, and a hopeful string of young savages, all in their fig-leaves; not one of them could speak a word of English. This man was by birth a Virginian, and had been forty years among the Chickasaws. His countenance and manners were savage and worse than Indian. I met many parties of boatmen to-day, and crossed a number of bad swamps. The woods continued to exhibit the same open luxuriant appearance, and at night I lodged at a white man's, who has also two wives, and a numerous progeny of young savages. Here I met with a lieutenant of the United States army, anxiously inquiring for General Hampton. On Friday the same open woods continued; I met several parties of Indians, and passed two or three of their hamlets. At one of these were two fires in the yard, and at each, eight or ten Indians, men and women, squat on the ground. In these hamlets there is generally one house built of a circular form, and plastered thickly all over without and within with clay. This they call a *hot house*, and it is the general winter quarters of the hamlet in cold weather. Here they all kennel, and having neither window nor place for the smoke to escape, it must be a sweet place while forty or fifty of them have it in occupancy. Round some of these hamlets were great droves of cattle, horses, and hogs. I lodged this night on the top of a hill far from water, and suffered severely for thirst. On Saturday I passed a number of most execrable swamps, the weather was extremely warm, and I had been attacked by something like the dysentery, which occasioned a constant burning thirst, and weakened me greatly. I stopt this day frequently to wash my head and throat in the water, to allay the burning thirst, and putting on my hat, without wiping, received considerable relief from it. Since crossing the Tennessee the woods have been interspersed with pine, and the soil has become more sandy. This day I met a Captain Hughes, a traveller, on his return from Santa Fee. My

complaint increased so much that I could scarcely sit on horseback, and all night my mouth and throat were parched with a burning thirst and fever. On Sunday I bought some raw eggs which I ate. I repeated the dose at mid-day, and towards evening, and found great benefit from this simple remedy. I inquired all along the road for fresh eggs, and for nearly a week made them almost my sole food, till I completed my cure. The water in these cane swamps is little better than poison; and under the heat of a burning sun, and the fatigues of travelling, it is difficult to repress the urgent calls of thirst. On the Wednesday following, I was assailed by a tremendous storm of rain, wind, and lightning, until I and my horse were both blinded by the deluge, and unable to go on. I sought the first most open place, and dismounting stood for half an hour under the most profuse heavenly *shower-bath* I ever enjoyed. The roaring of the storm was terrible; several trees around me were broken off, and torn up by the roots, and those that stood were bent almost to the ground: limbs of trees of several hundred weight flew past within a few yards of me, and I was astonished how I escaped. I would rather take my chance in a field of battle, than in such a tornado again.

"On the fourteenth day of my journey, at noon, I arrived at this place, having overcome every obstacle, alone, and without being acquainted with the country; and what surprised the boatmen more, *without whisky*. On an average I met from forty to sixty boatmen every day, returning from this place and New Orleans. The Chickasaws are a friendly, inoffensive people, and the Choctaws, though more reserved, are equally harmless. Both of them treated me with civility, though I several times had occasion to pass through their camps, where many of them were drunk. The paroquet which I carried with me was a continual fund of amusement to all ages of these people; and as they crowded around to look at it, gave me an opportunity of studying their physiognomies, without breach of good manners.

"In thus hastily running over the particulars of this jour-

ney, I am obliged to omit much that would amuse and interest you; but my present situation, a noisy tavern, crowded in every corner, even in the room where I write, with the sons of riot and dissipation, prevents me from enlarging on particulars. I could also have wished to give you some account of this place, and of the celebrated Mississippi, of which you have heard so much. On these subjects, however, I can at present only offer you the following slight sketch, taken the morning after my arrival here.

"The best view of this place and surrounding scenery, is from the old Spanish fort on the south side of the town, about a quarter of a mile distant. From this high point, looking up the river, Natchez lies on your right, a mingled group of green trees, and white and red houses, occupying an uneven plain, much washed into ravines, rising as it recedes from the bluff or high precipitous bank of the river. There is, however, neither steeple, cupola, nor distinguished object to add interest to its appearance. The country beyond it to the right is thrown up into the same irregular knolls; and at the distance of a mile, in the same direction, you have a peep of some cultivated farms, bounded by the general forest. On your left you look down, at a depth of two or three hundred feet, on the river, winding majestically to the south; the intermediate space exhibiting wild perpendicular precipices of brown earth. This part of the river and shore is the general rendezvous of all the arks or Kentucky boats, several hundreds of which are at present lying moored there, loaded with the produce of the thousand shores of this noble river. The busy multitudes below present a perpetually varying picture of industry; and the noise and uproar, softened by the distance, with the continual crowing of the poultry with which many of these arks are filled, produce cheerful and exhilirating ideas. The majestic Mississippi, swelled by his ten thousand tributary streams, of a pale brown colour, half a mile wide, and spotted with trunks of trees, that show the different threads of the current and its numerous eddies, bears his depth of water past in silent grandeur. Seven

gun-boats, anchored at equal distances along the stream, with their ensigns displayed, add to the effect. A few scattered houses are seen on the low opposite shore, where a narrow strip of cleared land exposes the high gigantic trunks of some deadened timber that bound the woods. The whole country beyond the Mississippi, from south round to west, and north, presents to the eye one universal level ocean of forest, bounded only by the horizon. So perfect is this vast level, that not a leaf seems to rise above the plain, as if shorn by the hands of heaven. At this moment, while I write, a terrific thunder storm, with all its towering assemblage of black alpine clouds, discharging lightning in every direction, overhangs this vast level, and gives a magnificence and sublime effect to the whole."

The foregoing letters present us with an interesting account of our author's journey, until his arrival at Natchez, on the seventeenth of May. In his diary he says—"This journey, four hundred and seventy-eight miles from Nashville, I have performed alone, through difficulties, which those who have never passed the road could not have a conception of." We may readily suppose that he had not only difficulties to encounter, encumbered as he necessarily was with his shooting apparatus, and bulky baggage, but also dangers, in journeying through a frightful wilderness, where almost impenetrable cane-swamps and morasses present obstacles to the progress of the traveller, which require all his resolution and activity to overcome. Superadded to which, as we are informed, he had a severe attack of the dysentery, when remote from any situation which could be productive of either comfort or relief; and he was under the painful necessity of trudging on, debilitated and dispirited with a disease, which threatened to put a period to his existence. An Indian, having been made acquainted with his situation, recommended the eating of strawberries, which were then fully ripe, and in great abundance. On this delightful fruit, and newly laid eggs, taken raw, he wholly lived for several days; and he attributed his restoration to health to these simple remedies.

On the sixth of June our traveller reached New Orleans, distant from Natchez two hundred and fifty-two miles. As the sickly season was fast approaching, it was deemed advisable not to tarry long in this place; and his affairs being despatched, he sailed on the twenty-fourth in a ship bound to New York, at which place he arrived on the thirtieth of July; and soon reached Philadelphia, enriched with a copious stock of materials for his work, including several beautiful and hitherto unknown birds.*

In the newly settled country through which Wilson had to pass, in his last journey, it was reasonable not to expect much encouragement in the way of subscriptions. Yet he was not only honoured with the names of some respectable individuals; but also received hospitable treatment from several persons, and those, too, to whom he had not been introduced. It is a singular fact, that from those to whom he had letters of introduction, and from whom most had been expected, he received the fewest acts of civility.

The principal events of his journey have been given in his letters; but I might select from his diary many interesting passages, if the limits allotted to this memoir would admit of copiousness of detail.

* The editor of Wilson's Poems, which were published at Paisley in 1816, gives what he states to be an extract from one of our author's letters to his father, wherein it is said that he had travelled through West Florida to New Orleans, and had "sailed thence to East Florida, furnished with a letter to the Spanish Governor." This passage needs explanation. Wilson was never either in East or West Florida; (except a small part of the latter province, through which the road to New Orleans passed,) but, in the event of his going thither, had provided himself with a letter of introduction from Don Luis de Onis, the Spanish ambassador to the United States, to Don Enrique White, governor of East Florida, and another to Don Vincente Folch, governor of West Florida. In his passage from New Orleans to New York, he merely landed, for a few minutes, upon one or two desert islands lying in the Florida Gulf.

He departed from Philadelphia on the thirtieth of January, 1810; and returned on the second of August, of the same year. It is stated in his diary that the total amount of his expenses, until his arrival in New York, was the sum of four hundred and fifty-five dollars. This particular is given as a proof of how much may be performed, by a good economist, with slender means.

It is not unusual for scholars to keep diaries when they travel. These writings are commonly the objects of great curiosity, as we are all anxious to know what were the impressions which the incidents of a journey made upon the mind, when it was in the fitest state to receive them.

For the gratification of the reader, I will make a few short extracts from Wilson's Journal, as specimens of his mode of writing these unstudied narratives.

"March 9.—Visited a number of the literati and wealthy of Cincinnati, who all told me that they would think of it, viz. of subscribing: they are a very thoughtful people.

"March 17.—Rained and hailed all last night, set off at eight o'clock, after emptying my boat of the deluge of water. Rowed hard all day; at noon recruited myself with some biscuits, cheese and American wine. Reach the falls—night sets in—hear the roaring of the rapids. After excessive hard work arrive at Beargrass creek, and fasten my boat to a Kentucky one. Take my baggage and grope my way to Louisville—put up at the Indian Queen tavern, and gladly sit down to rest myself.

"March 18.—Rose quite refreshed. Found a number of land speculators here. Titles to lands in Kentucky subject to great disputes.

"March 19.—Rambling round the town with my gun. Examined Mr. ———'s drawings in crayons—very good. Saw two new birds he had, both *Motacillæ*.

"March 20.—Set out this afternoon with the gun —killed nothing new. People in taverns here devour their meals. Many shopkeepers board in taverns—also boatmen, land speculators, merchants, &c. *No naturalist to keep me company.*

"March 21.—Went out this afternoon shooting with Mr. A. Saw a number of Sandhill cranes. Pigeons numerous.

"March 23.—Packed up my things which I left in the care of a merchant here, to be sent on to Lexington; and having parted, with great regret, with my paroquet, to the gentlemen of the tavern, I bade adieu to Louisville, to which place I had

four letters of recommendation, and was taught to expect much of every thing there; but neither received one act of civility from those to whom I was recommended, one subscriber, nor *one new bird;* though I delivered my letters, ransacked the woods repeatedly, and visited all the characters likely to subscribe. *Science or literature has not one friend in this place.* Every one is so intent on making money that they can talk of nothing else; and they absolutely devour their meals that they may return the sooner to their business. Their manners correspond with their features.

" Good country this for lazy fellows: they plant corn, turn their pigs into the woods, and in the autumn feed upon corn and pork—they lounge about the rest of the year.

" March 24.—Weather cool. Walked to Shelbyville to breakfast. Passed some miserable log-houses in the midst of rich fields. Called at a 'Squire C.'s, who was rolling logs. Sat down beside him, but was not invited in, though it was about noon.

" March 29.—Finding my baggage not likely to come on, I set out from Frankfort for Lexington. The woods swarm with pigs, squirrels and woodpeckers. Arrive exceedingly fatigued.

" Wherever you go you hear people talking of buying and selling land; no readers, all traders. The Yankees, wherever you find them, are all traders. Found one here, a house carpenter, who came from Massachusetts, and brought some barrels of apples down the river from Pennsylvania to this town, where he employs the negro women to hawk them about the streets, at thirty-seven and a half cents per dozen.

" Restless, speculating set of mortals here, full of lawsuits, no great readers, even of politics or newspapers.

" The sweet courtesies of life, the innumerable civilities in deeds and conversation, which cost one so little, are seldom found here. Every man you meet with has either some land to buy or sell, some law-suit, some coarse hemp or corn to dispose of; and if the conversation do not lead to any of these he will force it. Strangers here receive less civilities than in any

place I have ever been in. The respect due to the fatigues and privations of travellers is no where given, because every one has met with as much, and thinks he has seen more than any other. No one listens to the adventures of another, without interrupting the narrative with his own; so that, instead of an auditor, he becomes a competitor in adventure-telling. So many adventurers, also, continually wandering about here, injure the manners of the people, for avarice and knavery prey most freely and safely upon passengers whom they may never meet again.

"These few observations are written in Salter White's garret, with little or no fire, wood being a scarce article here—the forests being a full *half mile* distant.

"April 9.—Court held to-day, large concourse of people; not less than one thousand horses in town, hitched to the side-posts —no food for them all day. Horses selling by auction. Negro woman sold same way: my reflections while standing by and hearing her cried: 'three hundred and twenty-five dollars for this woman and boy! going! going!' Woman and boy afterwards weep. Damned damned slavery! this is one infernal custom which the Virginians have brought into this country. Rude and barbarous appearance of the crowd. Hopkins's double cutters much wanted here.

"April 10.—Was introduced to several young ladies this afternoon, whose agreeable society formed a most welcome contrast to that of the lower orders of the other sex. Mrs. * * *, an amiable, excellent lady; think that savage ignorance, rudeness and boorishness, were never so contrasted by female sweetness, affability and intelligence.

"April 12.—Went this evening to drink tea with Mr. * * *; was introduced to Mrs. * * *, a most lovely, accomplished and interesting woman. Her good sense and lively intelligence of a cast far superior to that of almost any woman I have ever seen. She is most unfortunately unwell with a nervous complaint, which affects her head. She told me, most

feelingly, that the spring, which brings joy to every other being, brings sorrow to her, for in winter she is always well.

"April 25. Breakfasted at Walton's, thirteen miles from Nashville. This place is a fine rich hollow, watered by a charming, clear creek, that never fails. Went up to Madison's Lick, where I shot three paroquets and some small birds.

"April 26. Set out early, the hospitable landlord, Isaac Walton, refusing to take any thing for my fare, or that of my horse, saying—"*You seem to be travelling for the good of the world; and I cannot, I will not charge you any thing. Whenever you come this way, call and stay with me, you shall be welcome!*" This is the first instance of *such** hospitality which I have met with in the United States."

"Wednesday, May 23. Left Natchez, after procuring twelve subscribers; and having received a kind letter of invitation from William Dunbar, Esq., I availed myself of his goodness, and rode nine miles along the usual road to his house; where, though confined to his bed by a severe indisposition, I was received with great hospitality and kindness; had a neat bed-room assigned me; and was requested to consider myself as at home during the time I should find it convenient to stay in exploring this part of the country."

The letter above mentioned, which is now before me, is worthy of transcription:

"*Forest*, 20*th May*, 1810.

"Sir,

"It is very unfortunate that I should be so much indisposed as to be confined to my bed-room; nevertheless, I cannot give up the idea of having the pleasure of seeing you as soon as you find it convenient; the perusal of your first volume of Ornithology, lent me by General Wilkinson, has produced in me a very great desire of making your acquaintance.

* The editor of Wilson's Poems, in quoting this paragraph, omitted the word *such*, thereby intending to convey a charge of the want of hospitality in the American character, which our author rarely experienced. Wilson's meaning is sufficiently obvious, without comment.

"I understand, from my boy, that you propose going in a few days to New Orleans, where you will see some small cabinets of natural history that may interest you. But, as I presume it is your intention to prosecute your inquiries into the interior of our country, this cannot be done better than from my house, as your head quarters; where every thing will be made convenient to your wishes. My house stands literally in the forest, and your beautiful Orioles, with other elegant birds, are our court-yard companions.

"The bearer attends you with a couple of horses, on the supposition that it may be convenient for you to visit us to-day; otherwise he shall wait upon you any other day that you shall appoint.

"I am respectfully, &c.

"WILLIAM DUNBAR."

This excellent gentleman, whose hospitality was thus promptly excited, has since paid the debt of nature; and his grateful guest fondly cherished, to the last hour of his existence, the remembrance of those happy moments which had been passed in his society, and that of his amiable and accomplished family.

TO MR. WILLIAM BARTRAM.

Philadelphia, September 2, 1810.

"Incessant labour since my return, to make up my loss of drawings, which were sent by post from Nashville, has hitherto prevented me from paying you a visit. I am closely engaged on my third volume. Any particulars relative to the history of the meadow lark, crow black-bird, snow bunting, cuckoo, paroquet, nonpareil, pinnated grous, or blue grosbeak, if interesting, would be received by me with much pleasure. I have lately received from Michaux a number of rich specimens of birds, printed in colours. I have since made some attempts at this kind of printing, and have succeeded tolerably well.

"Michaux has published several numbers of his American

Sylva, in Paris, with coloured plates. I expect them here soon.

"I collected a number of entire new species in my south-western tour; and in my return I visited several of the islands off the Florida shore, where I met with some very curious land birds.

"Mr. Dunbar, of Natchez, remembered you very well, and desired me to carry his good wishes to you."

TO MR. WM. DUNCAN, FRANKFORD, PENN.

Philadelphia, February 12, 1811.

"So you have once more ascended the preceptor's rostrum, to wield the terrors of the *taws* and *hickory*. Trying as this situation is, and various and distracting as its avocations sometimes undoubtedly are, it is elysium to the scenes which you have lately emerged from; and as far transcends these latter, as honourable independence towers above despised and insulted servitude. You wish me to suggest any hints I may think proper for your present situation. Your own experience and prudence render any thing I could advise unnecessary, as it is all included in the two resolutions which you have already taken; first, to distinguish, as clearly as possible, the whole extent of your duty; and, secondly, to fulfil every item of that to the best of your abilities. Accordingly, the more extensive and powerful these are, the greater good you will be capable of doing; the higher and more dignified will your reputation be; and the easier and calmer will your deportment be, under every circumstance of duty. You have but these two things to surmount, and the whole routine of teaching will become an agreeable amusement; and every closing day will shed over your mind that blissful tranquillity, "which nothing earthly gives or can destroy."

"Devote your whole time, except what is proper for needful exercise, to rendering yourself completely master of your business. For this purpose rise by the peep of dawn; take your regular walk; and then commence your stated studies.

Be under no anxiety to hear what people think of you, or of your tutorship; but study the improvement, and watch over the good conduct, of their children consigned to your care, as if they were your own. Mingle respect and affability with your orders and arrangements. Never show yourself feverish or irritated; but preserve a firm and dignified, a just and energetic deportment, in every emergency. To be completely master of one's business, and ever anxious to discharge it with fidelity and honour, is to be great, beloved, respectable and happy.

"I could have wished that you had been accommodated with a room and boarding in a more private and retired situation, where your time and reflections would have been more your own; and perhaps these may be obtained hereafter. Try to discover your own defects, and labour with all your energy to supply them. Respect yourself, and fear nothing but *vice* and *idleness*. If one had no other reward for doing one's duty, but the grateful sensations arising therefrom on the retrospection, the recompense would be abundant, as these alone are able to bear us up amidst every reverse.

* * * *

"At present I cannot enlarge further, my own mind being harrassed with difficulties relative to my publication. I have now no farther dependence on Murray; and I mean to make it consistent both with the fame, and the interest, of Lawson to do his best for me. I hope you will continue to let me hear from you, from time to time. I anticipate much pleasure from the improvements which I have no doubt you will now make in the several necessary departments of your business. Wishing you every success in your endeavours to excel, I remain, with sincere regard, &c."

In the early part of the year 1812, Wilson published his fifth volume; and as the preface is interesting, we here insert an extract from it, for the gratification of the reader.

"The fifth volume of this extensive work is submitted to the public with all due deference and respect; and the author having now, as he conjectures, reached the middle stage of his journey, or in traveller's phrase, the 'half-way house,' may be permitted to indulge himself with a slight retrospect of the ground he has already traversed, and a glimpse of that which still lies before him.

"The whole of our Land Birds (those of the sixth volume included, which are nearly ready for the press) have now been figured and described, probably a very few excepted, which, it is, hoped will also shortly be obtained. These have been gleaned up from an extensive territory of woods and fields, unfrequented forests, solitary ranges of mountains, swamps and morasses, by successive journies and excursions of more than ten thousand miles. With all the industry which a single individual could possibly exert, several species have doubtless escaped him. These, future expeditions may enable him to procure; or the kindness of his distant literary friends obligingly supply him with.

"In endeavouring to collect materials for describing truly and fully our feathered tribes, he has frequently had recourse to the works of those European naturalists who have written on the subject; he has examined their pages with an eager and inquisitive eye; but his researches in that quarter have been but too frequently repaid with disappointment, and often with disgust. On the subject of the *manners* and *migrations* of our birds, which in fact constitute almost the only instructive and interesting parts of their history, all is a barren and a dreary waste. A few vague and formal particulars of their size, specific marks, &c. accompanied sometimes with figured representations that would seem rather intended to caricature than to illustrate their originals, is all that the greater part of them can boast of. Nor are these the most exceptionable parts of their performances; the novelty of fable, and the wildness of fanciful theory, are frequently substituted for realities; and *conjectures* instead of *facts* called up for their support. Prejudice,

as usual, has in numerous instances united with its parent, ignorance, to depreciate and treat with contempt what neither of them understood; and the whole interesting assemblage of the feathered tribes of this vast continent, which in richness of plumage, and in strength, sweetness and variety of song, will be found to exceed those of any other quarter of the globe, are little known save in the stuffed cabinets of the curious, and among the abstruse pages and technical catalogues of dry systematic writers.

"From these barren and musty records, the author of the present work has a thousand times turned with a delight bordering on adoration, to the magnificent repository of the woods and fields—the *Grand Aviary of Nature.* In this divine school he has studied from no vulgar *copy;* but from the works of the GREAT MASTER OF CREATION himself; and has read with rapture the lessons of his wisdom, his goodness and his love, in the conformation, the habitudes, melody and migrations of this beautiful portion of the work of his hands. To communicate as correct ideas of these as his feeble powers were capable of, and thus, from objects, that, in our rural walks, almost every where present themselves, to deduce not only amusement and instruction, but the highest incitements to virtue and piety, have been the author's most anxious and ardent wish. On many of his subjects, indeed, it has not been in his power to say much. The recent discovery of some, and the solitary and secluded habits of others, have opposed great obstacles to his endeavours in this respect. But a time is approaching when these obstacles will no longer exist. When the population of this immense western Republic will have diffused itself over every acre of ground fit for the comfortable habitation of man—when farms, villages, towns and glittering cities, thick as the stars in a winter's evening, overspread the face of our beloved country, and every hill, valley and stream has its favourite name, its native flocks and rural inhabitants; then, not a warbler shall flit through our thickets, but its name, its notes and habits will be familiar to all; repeated in their sayings, and celebrated in their village

songs. At that happy period, should any vestige or memory of the present publication exist, be it known to our more enlightened posterity, as some apology for the deficiencies of its author, that in the period in which he wrote, three-fourths of our feathered tribes were altogether unknown even to the proprietors of the woods which they frequented—that without patron, fortune or recompense, he brought the greater part of these from the obscurity of ages, gave to each "a local habitation and a name" —collected from personal observation whatever of their characters and manners seemed deserving of attention; and delineated their forms and features, in their native colours, as faithfully as he could, as records, at least, of their existence.

"In treating of those birds more generally known, I have endeavoured to do impartial justice to their respective characters. Ignorance and stubborn-rooted opinions, even in this country, have rendered some odious that are eminently useful; and involved the manners of others in fable and mystery, which in themselves are plain and open as day. To remove prejudices when they oppose themselves to the influence of humanity is a difficult, but when effected, a most pleasing employment. If therefore, in devesting this part of the natural history of our country of many of its fables and most forbidding features, and thus enabling our youth to become more intimately acquainted with this charming portion of the feathered creation, I should have succeeded in multiplying their virtuous enjoyments, and in rendering them more humane to those little choristers, how gratifying to my heart would be the reflection! For to me it appears, that of all inferior creatures Heaven seems to have intended birds as the most cheerful associates of man; to sooth and exhilarate him in his labours by their varied melody, of which no other creature, but man, is capable; to prevent the increase of those supernumerary hosts of insects that would soon consume the products of his industry; to glean up the refuse of his fields, 'that nothing be lost,' and, what is of much more interest, to be to him the most endearing examples of the tenderest connubial love and parental affection."

TO MR. F. A. MICHAUX.

Philadelphia, June 6th, 1812.

"My dear friend,

"I had the pleasure of receiving a letter from you, dated April 10, 1812; but living at Mr. Bartram's, I have not yet seen Mr. Correa, the gentleman who brought it over. I have also had the great satisfaction of examining the plates of your four numbers of Forest Trees, which are beautifully executed; and I regret most sincerely that my little knowledge of the French language† prevents me from perusing with equal satisfaction, the interesting particulars you relate of their history. I expected long before this to be able to congratulate you on the publication of a translation of your work here, and I announced the same in the preface to one of my volumes; but sorry I am to inform you, that no steps have yet been taken to put that design in execution, and I fear none will be taken for many months to come. Unless there be an evident certainty of profit, booksellers, in general, are very indifferent to publish works of any kind, however great their merits may be; and the poor author's feelings are little regarded. Few men have known this more experimentally than myself. I have sacrificed every thing to publish my Ornithology—have written six volumes and am engaged on the seventh. * * *

"I have frequently conversed with Mr. Bradford about publishing a translation of your Forest Trees; and you may rest assured that, should it be undertaken, I will use all my influence in its favour. Were you here yourself, I have no doubt but it would be undertaken, and I think with success, for all who have seen it admire it. I procured our good friend, Mr. Wm.

† Wilson's ignorance of French was a great disadvantage to him; and he never ceased to regret his want of instruction in a tongue, which is considered not only important to the scholar, but indispensable to the naturalist. The number of works, in the various departments of Natural History, which France annually produces, is truly astonishing; and fortunate is that student whose acquirements in her language enable him to profit of the knowledge of this illustrious nation.

Bartram, a sight of it, and he was greatly delighted with its appearance. One of my friends read a great part of it in *English* to him, and he was highly satisfied. * * * *

"Dr. Barton has not yet published his *General Zoology*,† which he has been announcing, from time to time, for so many years. It is much easier to *say* these things than *do* them. * *

"Mr. Wm. Bartram is still as you left him, and you are frequently the subject of our conversation at table. I have made many extensive excursions lately, and have discovered, in all, about *forty* new species of Land Birds, never taken notice of by any other writer. I am now engaged on the Water Birds; and had just returned yesterday from the seashore when your letter was presented to me. Dr. H. and Mr. P. have both publicly announced your work, but as no translation has been yet made, it has not been reviewed by any of our writers. * *

"Wishing you all the success which is justly due to the labours, journies, and investigations, you have made in behalf of Natural History, I remain, &c."

In September, 1812, Wilson undertook a journey into the eastern states, for the purpose of visiting his subscribers, and settling accounts with his agents.

TO MR. GEORGE ORD.

Boston, October 13, 1812.

"Dear Sir,

"It is not in my power at present to give you any thing more than a slight sketch of my rambles since leaving Philadel-

† This work, which it was the intention of the late learned professor to entitle "Elements of Zoology," after being *ten* years in the press, was advanced no further than *fifty-six* pages, in octavo, at the death of the author. It does not appear that he left much manuscript matter in continuation, consequently the public will derive no benefit from a work, which is too incomplete for publication. The printed sheets I have read, not only with satisfaction, but instruction; and cannot forbear expressing my regret that an undertaking, which Dr. Barton certainly knew how to perform, and to which his learning was adequate, should have been suffered to perish in embryo. The art of concentrating his talents, was one for which the professor was not greatly distinguished.

phia. My route up the Hudson afforded great pleasure, mingled with frequent regret that you were not along with me, to share the enjoyment. About thirty miles south of Albany we passed within ten miles of the celebrated Catskill mountains, a gigantic group, clothed with forest to the summits. In the river here I found our common reed (*Zizania aquatica*) growing in great abundance in shoals extending along the middle of the river. I saw flocks of Red-wings, and some Black Ducks, but no Rail, or Reed-birds.

* * * *

"From this place my journey led me over a rugged, mountainous country, to Lake Champlain, along which I coasted as far as Burlington in Vermont. Here I found the little Coot-footed Tringa or Phalarope* that you sent to Mr. Peale; a new and elegantly marked Hawk; and observed some Black Ducks. The shores are alternate sandy bays, and rocky headlands running into the lake. Every tavern was crowded with officers, soldiers and travellers. Eight of us were left without a bed; but having an excellent great coat, I laid myself down in a corner, with a determination of sleeping in defiance of the uproar of the house, and the rage of my companions, who would not disgrace themselves by a prostration of this sort.

* * * *

"From Lake Champlain I traversed a rude mountainous region to Connecticut river, one hundred miles above Dartmouth College. I spent several days with the gun in Groton, and Ryegate townships, and made some discoveries. From this I coasted along the Connecticut to a place called Haverhill, ten miles from the foot of Moose-hillock, one of the highest of the *White Mountains* of New Hampshire. I spent the greater part of a day in ascending to the peak of one of these majestic mountains, whence I had the most sublime and astonishing view that was ever afforded me. One immensity of forest lay below, extended on all sides to the farthest verge of the horizon; while the only prominent objects were the columns of smoke from burning

* P. Fulicarius.

woods, that rose from various parts of the earth beneath to the heavens; for the day was beautiful and serene. Hence I travelled to Dartmouth, and thence in a direct course to Boston. From Boston I passed through Portsmouth to Portland, and got some things new; my return was by a different route. I have procured three new and beautiful Hawks; and have gleaned up a stock of remarks that will be useful to me hereafter.

"I hope, my dear sir, that you have been well since I left you. I have myself been several times afflicted with a violent palpitation of the heart,* and want to try whether a short voyage by sea will not be beneficial.

"In New England the rage of war, the virulence of politics, and the pursuit of commercial speculations, engross every faculty. The voice of Science, and the charms of Nature, unless these last present themselves in the form of *prize sugars*, *coffee*, or *rum*, are treated with contempt."

The excursion to the White Mountains, above mentioned, was succeeded by rather an unpleasant occurrence. The good people of Haverhill perceiving a stranger among them of very inquisitive habits, and who evinced great zeal in exploring the country, sagaciously concluded that he was a spy from Canada, employed in taking sketches of the place, to facilitate the invasion of the enemy. Under these impressions it was thought conducive to the public safety that Wilson should be apprehended; and he was accordingly taken into the custody of a magistrate, who, on being made acquainted with his character, and the nature of his visit, politely dismissed him, with many apologies for the mistake.

The publication of the Ornithology now advanced as rapidly as a due regard to correctness and elegance would admit. In order to become better acquainted with the feathered tribes, and to observe their migrations with more accuracy, as well as to enjoy the important advantages of a rural retirement, Wilson resided the better part of the years 1811-12 at the Bo-

* This distressing disease, so well known to the literary student, Wilson was often afflicted with.

tanic Garden of his friend, Mr. Bartram. There removed from the noise, bustle, and interruption of the metropolis, he was enabled to dispose of his time to the best advantage; for when fatigued with close application within doors, to recruit his mind and body he had only to cross the threshold of his abode, and he at once found himself surrounded with those acquaintance, the observing of whose simple manners not only afforded the most agreeable recreation, but who were perpetually contributing to the great undertaking which he was earnestly labouring to complete.

In the month of March, 1812, Wilson was chosen a member of the Society of Artists of the United States; but in the spring of the succeeding year, a greater honour was conferred upon him, by his being elected a member of the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia.

TO MR. WM. BARTRAM.

Philadelphia, April 21, 1813.

" My dear friend,

" I have been extremely busy these several months, my colourists having all left me; so I have been obliged to do extra duty this last winter. Next week I shall publish my seventh volume; and shall send you your copy with the earliest opportunity. I am now engaged with the ducks, all of which, that I am acquainted with, will be comprehended in the eighth volume.

" Since I had the pleasure of seeing you, I have hardly left the house half an hour; and I long most ardently to breathe once more the fresh air of the country, and gaze on the lovely face of Nature. Will it be convenient for the family to accommodate me (as I shall be alone) this summer? Please to let me know.

" I lately received from the celebrated Mr. West, a proof impression of his grand historical picture of the death of Admiral Nelson—a present which I highly value.

" The Philosophical Society of Philadelphia have done me

the honour to elect me a member, for which I must certainly, in gratitude, make them a communication on some subject, this summer. I long very much to hear from you; and, with my best wishes for your health and happiness, am very truly

Your sincere friend."

As soon as the seventh volume of the Ornithology was published, its author, and the writer of this sketch, set out on their last expedition to Great Egg-harbour.* There they remained for nearly four weeks, constantly occupied in collecting materials for the eighth volume, which Wilson had resolved should in no respects fall short of the preceding; but which should, if possible, enhance his reputation, by the value of its details, and the beauty of its embellishments.

Immediately on his return to Philadelphia, he engaged anew in his arduous avocation; and by the month of August he had succeeded in completing the letter-press of the eighth volume, though the whole of the plates were not finished. But unfortunately his great anxiety to conclude the work, condemned him to an excess of toil, which, inflexible as was his mind, his bodily frame was unable to bear. He was likewise, by this flood of business, prevented from residing in the country, where hours of mental lassitude might have been beguiled by a rural walk, or the rough but invigorating exercise of the gun. At length he was attacked by a disease, which, perhaps, at another period of his life might not have been attended with fatal effects, but which now, in his debilitated state of body, and harassed mind, proved a mighty foe, whose assaults all the combined efforts of friendship, science and skill, could not repel. The Dysentery, after a sickness of ten days, closed the mortal career of Alexander Wilson, on the twenty-third of August, 1813.

It may not be going too far to maintain, that in no age or nation has there ever arisen one more eminently qualified for a naturalist than the subject of these memoirs. He was not only

* Wilson made six journies to the coast of New Jersey, in pursuit of water birds, which abound in the neighbourhood of Great Egg-Harbour.

an enthusiastic admirer of the works of creation, but he was consistent in research; and permitted no dangers or fatigues to abate his ardour, or relax his exertions. He inured himself to hardships by frequent and laborious exercise; and was never more happy than when employed in some enterprise, which promised from its difficulties the novelties of discovery. Whatever was obtained with ease, to him appeared to be attended, comparatively speaking, with small interest: the acquisitions of labour alone seemed worthy of his ambition. He was no closet philosopher—exchanging the frock of activity for the night-gown and slippers. He was indebted for his ideas, not to books, which err, but to Nature which is infallible; and the inestimable transcript of her works, which he has bequeathed to us, possesses a charm which affects us the more, the better acquainted we become with the delightful original. His inquisitive habits procured him from others a vast heterogeneous mass of information; but he had the happy talent of selecting from this rubbish whatever was valuable. His perseverance was uncommon; and when engaged in pursuit of a particular object, he would never relinquish it, while there was a chance of success. His powers of observation were very acute, and he seldom erred in judgment, when favoured with a fair opportunity of investigation.

Credulity has been aptly termed "the vice of naturalists;" but it may be said, to the honour of our author, that it would be difficult to find one less infected with this vice than himself. His mind, strongly imbued with common sense, and familiar with the general laws of nature, could not be imposed upon by appearances; and marvellous narratives, in that science which he had so much at heart, were the objects of his decided disapprobation. The ridicule and scorn with which he treated the hypothesis of the annual torpidity of swallows are well known; and he regarded with equal contempt those tales of the fascinating faculty attributed to serpents, which are yet but too well adapted to the taste of the multitude to be effectively discredited.

Having been "something of a traveller," it would be reasonable to conclude that Wilson had been familiar with "novel sights;" but we no where find that he ever beheld a toad leaping into day, from its rocky domicil of five thousand years, or a mermaid "sleeking her soft alluring locks" in the sun. That wonder of the "vasty deep," the *Sea Serpent* of Gloucester, had not attracted the attention of the public in his time; but if it had, there is little doubt that he would have promptly exerted himself to expose one of the grossest fictions that was ever palmed upon the credulity of mankind.

That the industry of Wilson was great, his work will for ever testify. And our admiration is excited, that so much should have been performed in so short a time. When we take into consideration the state of our country, as respects the cultivation of the physical sciences; and that in the walk of Ornithology, particularly, no one, *deserving the title of a Naturalist*, had yet presumed to tread; when we view the labours of foreigners, who had interested themselves in our natural productions, and find how incompetent they were, through a deficiency of correct information, to instruct; and then when we reflect that a single individual, "*without patron, fortune, or recompense*," accomplished, in the space of *seven* years, as much as the combined body of European naturalists took a *century* to achieve, we feel almost inclined to doubt the evidence upon which this conclusion is founded. But it is a fact, which we feel a pride in asserting, that we have as faithful, complete, and interesting, an account of *our* birds, in the volumes of the American Ornithology, as the Europeans can at this moment boast of possessing of *theirs*. Let those who question the correctness of this opinion examine for themselves, and determine according to the dictates of an unbiassed judgment.

We need no other evidence of the unparalleled industry of our author, than the fact, that of *two hundred and seventy-eight species*, which have been figured and described in his Ornithology,* *fifty-six* had not been taken notice of by any

* The whole number of birds figured is three hundred and twenty.

former naturalist;* and several of the latter number are so extremely rare, that the specimens, from which the figures were taken, were the only ones that he was ever enabled to obtain. This expensive collection of birds was the result of many months of unwearied research, amongst forests, swamps and morasses, exposed to all the dangers, privations and fatigues, incident to such an undertaking. What but a remarkable passion for the pursuit, joined with the desire of fame, could have supported a solitary individual, in labours of body and mind, compared to which the bustling avocations of common life are mere holy-day activity or recreation!

Independent on that part of his work which was Wilson's particular province, viz. the drawing and describing of his subjects, he was necessitated to occupy much of his time in colouring the plates; his sole resource for support being in this employment, as he had been compelled to relinquish the superintendence of the Cyclopædia. This drudgery of colouring the plates, is a circumstance much to be regretted, as the work would have proceeded more rapidly if he could have avoided it. One of his principal difficulties, in effect, and that which caused him no small uneasiness, was the process of colouring. If this could have been done solely by himself; or, as he was obliged to seek assistance therein, if it could have been performed immediately under his eye, he would have been relieved of much anxiety; and would have better maintained a

* In this statement of the number of new species, I followed Wilson's own catalogue, wherein they are indicated. But it is proper to observe, that Vieillot's "*Oiseaux de L'Amérique Septentrionale*" were never seen by our author; otherwise he would have taken notice that some of his supposed nondescripts were figured and described in the above-mentioned costly work, which was published in Paris in the year 1807. Vieillot travelled in the United States, with the view of giving an account of our birds; he published only two folio volumes, with coloured plates; his publisher failed; and the copper-plates of the work, including those intended for the third volume, were sold at public sale for *old copper;* and are now (1825) in Philadelphia, and the property of William Maclure, Esq., the President of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

due equanimity; his mind being daily ruffled by the negligence of his assistants, who too often, through a deplorable want of skill and taste, made disgusting caricatures of what were intended to be modest imitations of simple nature.* Hence much of his precious time was spent in the irksome employment of inspecting and correcting the imperfections of others. This waste of his stated periods of labour, he felt himself constrained to compensate, by encroachments on those hours which Nature, tenacious of her rights, claims as her own: hours which she consecrates to rest—which she will not forego without a struggle; and which all those, who would preserve unimpaired the vigour of their mind and body, must respect. Of this intense and destructive application his friends failed not to admonish him; but to their kind remonstrances he would reply, that "life is short, and without exertion nothing can be performed." But the true cause of this extraordinary toil was his poverty. By the terms of agreement with his publisher, he was to furnish, at his own cost, all the drawings and literary matter for the work; and to have the whole under his control and superintendence. The publisher stipulated to find funds for the completion of the volumes. To support the heavy ex-

* In the preface to the third volume, Wilson states the anxiety which he had suffered on account of the colouring of the plates; and of his having made an arrangement, whereby his difficulties on that score had been surmounted. This arrangement proved in the end of greater injury than benefit.

The art of printing in colours is but little known in our country, and seldom practised; and the few attempts that have been made have only partially succeeded. An experiment of this nature was undertaken upon several plates of this work, but with a success by no means satisfactory. When Wilson commenced his labours, every thing relating to them was new to him; and the difficulty of fixing the proper tints, upon an uniform black ground, was the greater, inasmuch as he had to experiment himself, unaided by the counsel or example of those to whom the process was familiar.

The writer of this narrative has thought it his duty to state *some* of the embarrassments under which Wilson laboured, in the department of colouring the plates, in order to obviate criticisms, which too many are disposed to make, on supposed faults; but if *all* the difficulties were made known, there would be no fear for the result, among readers of candour and understanding.

pense of procuring materials, and other unavoidable expenditures, Wilson's only resource, as has been stated, was in colouring the plates.

In the preface to the fifth volume he observes: "The publication of an original work of this kind, in this country, has been attended with difficulties, great, and, it must be confessed, sometimes discouraging to the author, whose only reward *hitherto* has been the favourable opinion of his fellow-citizens, and the pleasure of the pursuit.

"Let but the generous hand of patriotism be stretched forth to assist and cherish the rising arts and literature of our country, and both will most assuredly, and that at no remote period, shoot forth, increase and flourish, with a vigour, a splendour and usefulness, inferior to no other on earth."

We have here an affirmation that the author had laboured without reward, except what was conferred by inefficient praise; and an eloquent appeal to the *generosity* and *patriotism* of his fellow-citizens. Seven illustrious cities disputed the honour of having given *birth* to the Prince of Epic song. Philadelphia first beheld that phenomenon, the "American Ornithology," rising amidst her boasted opulence, to vindicate the claims of a calumniated portion of creation; and to furnish her literary pride with a subject of exultation for ages to come. Yet duty calls upon us to record a fact, which may cause our native city to feel the glow of shame. Of all her literati, her men of benevolence, taste and riches, SEVENTY only, to the period of the author's decease, had the liberality to countenance him by a subscription, more than half of whom were *tradesmen*, *artists*, and persons of the middle class of society; whilst the little city of New Orleans, in the short space of *seventeen days*, furnished SIXTY subscribers to the "American Ornithology!"

Wilson was possessed of the nicest sense of honour. In all his dealings he was not only scrupulously just, but highly generous. His veneration for truth was exemplary. His disposition was social and affectionate. His benevolence was extensive. He was remarkably temperate in eating and drinking,

his love of study and retirement preserving him from the contaminating influence of the convivial circle. But as no one is perfect, Wilson in a small degree partook of the weakness of humanity. He was of the *Genus irritabile*, and was obstinate in opinion. It ever gave him pleasure to acknowledge error, when the conviction resulted from his own judgment alone, but he could not endure to be told of his mistakes. Hence his associates had to be sparing of their criticisms, through a fear of forfeiting his friendship. With almost all his friends he had occasionally, arising from a collision of opinion, some slight misunderstanding, which was soon passed over, leaving no disagreeable impression. But an act of disrespect he could ill brook, and a wilful injury he would seldom forgive.

In his person he was of a middle stature, of a thin habit of body; his cheek-bones projected, and his eyes, though hollow, displayed considerable vivacity and intelligence; his complexion was sallow, his mien thoughtful; his features were coarse, and there was a dash of vulgarity in his physiognomy, which struck the observer at the first view, but which failed to impress one on acquaintance. His walk was quick when travelling, so much so that it was difficult for a companion to keep pace with him; but when in the forests, in pursuit of birds, he was deliberate and attentive—he was, as it were, all eyes, and all ears.

Such was Alexander Wilson. When the writer of this humble biography indulges in retrospection, he again finds himself in the society of that individual, whose life was a series of those virtues which dignify human nature; he attends him in his wild-wood rambles, and listens to those pleasing observations, which the magnificence of creation was wont to give birth to; he sits at his feet, and receives the instructions of one, in science, so competent to teach; he beholds him in the social circle, and notes the complacency which he inspired in all around. But the transition from the past to the present quickens that anguish with which his heart must be filled, who casts a melancholy look on those scenes, a few years since endeared by

the presence of one, united to him by a conformity of taste, disposition and pursuit, and who reflects that that beloved friend can revisit them no more.

It was the intention of Wilson, on the completion of his Ornithology, to publish an edition in four volumes octavo; the figures to be engraved in wood, somewhat after the manner of Bewick's British Birds; and coloured with all the care that had been bestowed on the original plates. If he had lived to effect this scheme, the public would have been put in possession of a work of considerable elegance, as respects typography and illustrations; wherein the subjects would have been arranged in systematical order; and the whole at the cost of not more than one-fifth part of the quarto edition.

He likewise meditated a work on the quadrupeds of the United States; to be printed in the same splendid style of the Ornithology; the figures to be engraved with the highest finish, and by the best artists of our country. How much has science lost in the death of this ingenious and indefatigable naturalist!

His remains were deposited in the cemetery of the Swedish church, in the district of Southwark, Philadelphia. While in the enjoyment of health, he had conversed with a friend on the subject of his death, and expressed a wish to be buried in some rural spot, sacred to peace and solitude, whither the charms of nature might invite the steps of the votary of the Muses, and the lover of science, and where the birds might sing over his grave.

It has been an occasion of regret to those of his friends, to whom was confided the mournful duty of ordering his funeral, that his desire had not been made known to them, otherwise it should have been piously observed.

A plain marble tomb marks the spot where lie the ashes of this celebrated man; it bears the following inscription:

"This Monument
Covers the Remains of
ALEXANDER WILSON,
Author of the
AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY.
He was Born in Renfrewshire, Scotland,
On the 6 July, 1766;
Emigrated to the United States
In the Year 1794;
And Died in Philadelphia
Of the Dysentery,
On the 23 August, 1813,
Aged 47."

I shall now offer some brief remarks upon those writings of Wilson, which have fallen under my notice; and in the performance of this task, it will become my duty to speak of a work, which I had hoped would be permitted to lie in oblivion, but which either the indiscreet partiality of friends, or the avarice of a publisher, has lately dragged forth to the view of the public. From the volume which the author published himself, in the year 1791, and which is entitled, "Poems, Humorous, Satirical and Serious," a selection was made, and published, in 1816, at Paisley and at London, under the title of "Poems chiefly in the Scottish dialect; by Alexander Wilson, author of American Ornithology." When I commenced reading this selection, it was my intention to note its beauties and defects; but when I found how greatly the latter predominated, it occurred to me that no good could result from a critical examination of a work which few would read, which contains nothing deserving of applause; and which, if it has hitherto escaped criticism, it is because it has been deemed unworthy of a deliberate investigation.

The early writings of but few authors are worthy of being read, except for the purpose of tracing the progress of the mind. When one surveys the work in question with this view, one is astonished to find no indication of that genius which is so

conspicuous in after life; a barrenness of invention, a poverty of expression, a deficiency of taste and judgment, are its characteristics.

The author of the "Biographical Sketch," appended to the Selection* above mentioned, says, "We have it from Wilson's acquaintance, that many of the poems he had written were committed to the flames, without a moment's consideration, because the subject had lost its interest with himself." The writer thus gravely accounts for this conduct: "This instability of conduct was, no doubt, the result of untoward circumstances, operating upon a mind ardent in the pursuit of some-

* It appears by the advertisement affixed to this selection, that it "was made and printed under the direction of a gentleman who has since paid the debt of nature;" and that "it was his intention to give the life of Wilson." If one were allowed to form a conjecture of the abilities of this editor, by the judgment displayed in his choice, one would have no reason to regret that his task was never accomplished. How he could admit such productions as "The Wasp's Revenge," and the "Verses on the Death of a Favourite Spaniel," one may well inquire.

That Wilson himself entertained a mean opinion of his boyish publication, I am authorised to assert from the circumstance, that, though possessing a copy, he would never allow me to read it, notwithstanding I frequently urged him to grant me this favour.

An itinerant Scotchman once called upon Wilson's executors, with a request that he might be allowed the privilege of printing an edition of his poems, urging, in justification of the proposition, his peculiar fitness, by his knowledge of the *Scottish dialect*, for extending the *fame* of the author of the American Ornithology! It is needless to add that this poor schemer was dismissed with the reply, that the fame of Wilson did not stand in need of his assistance.

It is much to the honour of the American press, that it has abstained from re-printing the work which, with unfeigned sorrow, I have been compelled, by a sense of duty, to animadvert so severely upon. But I must confess, that when a brother weaver, Robert Tannahill, was introduced to our notice, I trembled for the fate of Wilson.

As has been stated, Wilson's poem of the "Foresters" was first published in the Port Folio. Shortly after the decease of its author, a very *modest* and *honest* gentleman, living in Pennsylvania, undertook its republication; and actually took out a *copy-right* for the same. That the poem was re-printed needs not excite our wonder; but that its sale should have been monopolized by a patent, is a trick of trade well worthy of remark.

thing yet undefined, or uncertain of the path it should follow, to attain that eminence and independence after which it so ardently aspired." Would it not be a more rational supposition, that, as he advanced in knowledge, he was taught to reject what he could not but be convinced was unworthy of the public eye? If we may form a conjecture of what was destroyed, by what was sanctioned by his own act of publication, there is certainly no cause to mourn the loss; and one can hardly forbear wishing that the whole had met a similar fate.

Of all the poetical productions of Wilson, written while in Scotland, his tale of "Watty and Meg" is the only one that has obtained popularity. In Cromek's "Select Scottish Songs" it is thus introduced: "The reader is here presented with an exquisite picture from low life, drawn with all the fidelity and exactness of Teniers, or Ostade, and enlivened with the humour of Hogarth. The story excites as much interest as if it had been written in a dramatic form, and really represented. The interest heightens as it proceeds, and is supported with wonderful spirit to the close of the poem.

"It must have been in no small degree gratifying to the feelings of the author, who published it anonymously, that, during a rapid sale of seven or eight editions, the public, universally, ascribed it to the pen of Burns. The author of 'Will and Jean, or Scotland's Scaith,' had the candour to acknowledge to the editor that he was indebted to this exquisite poem for the foundation of that popular performance."

This tale is certainly told in a spirited manner; but whether it is entitled to all the encomiums which have been lavished upon it or not, may admit of a question. The incidents are all common-place: a dram-drinking husband seeking refuge, in an ale-house, from a scolding-wife, who pursues him thither, and upbraids him, in no gentle terms, for deserting his home and family, and spending his time and substance among drunken blackguards. A pot companion had advised him to try the experiment of threatening to abandon her, in order to bring her into subjection: a scheme which had had a happy effect in

taming his own wife, who had given evidence of a shrewish disposition. The experiment being made by Watty, Meg is brought to terms. She solemnly promises to keep her temper —never again to scold her husband—never to follow him to the beer-house—never to put drunken to his name—never to look sad when he shall come home late—never to kick his shins, or pull his hair; and lastly she consents, with tears, that their hard earnings shall be kept solely by himself. The husband, rejoiced at this evidence of her humility and contrition, kisses her, and so the story ends.

In the management of this tale there is little art displayed; there is some natural description, it is true; but the laws of poetical justice are but ill observed, when misconduct so glaring as that of Watty's is passed over without censure; and he is allowed to triumph over the subjection of a poor woman, whose temper had become soured by his idleness and debauchery.

Such stories are not calculated to do good; on the contrary they may promote vice; and surely the vice of intemperance is no trifling evil in society. To blend instruction with amusement, we are told, should be the aim of all writers of fiction, particularly poets, whose influence over the mind has always been predominant. It is justly remarked, by an elegant writer,* that "there seems to be something in poetry that raises the possessors of that very singular talent far higher in the estimation of the world in general, than those who excel in any other of the refined arts." Then let poets take heed lest they misapply those talents, which, if properly directed, may be made subservient to the best interests of society.

In justice to our author I would remark, that though fond of describing scenes of low life, with which his education and habits had rendered him familiar, yet he appeared to have escaped the contaminating influence of vulgar associates, when arrived at manhood. His conduct, in this country, was truly exemplary. This observation, though out of place, I here

* Melmoth's Fitzosborne, letter 53.

make, as it seems to belong, incidentally, to the subject upon which I have been commenting.

The last edition of Watty and Meg, published under the inspection of the author, and by him corrected, was that given in the Port Folio for October, 1810.

The poetic effusions of Wilson, after he came to America, afford evidence of an improved taste. He acquired a facility of versification by practice; as his mind expanded with knowledge, his judgment received an accession of strength; and he displays a fancy which we look for in vain in his juvenile essays. But we must be understood as comparing him only with himself, at different periods of his life. Whether or not he ever attained to positive excellence in poetry, may be a subject of dispute.

In his "Solitary Tutor," we are presented with a picture of himself, while occupied in teaching a country school. The description of his place of residence, his schoolhouse, the adjoining forest, where many of his leisure hours were passed, and where he first commenced studying the manners of those birds, which he subsequently immortalized in his splendid work, is animated and graphical. The fabric of these verses reminds us of the Minstrel; and that he had this delightful poem in his eye, we are convinced by some of the descriptions and sentiments. The stanza beginning,

"In these green solitudes, one favourite spot,"

is accurately descriptive of a place, in Bartram's woods, whither he used to retire for the purposes of reading and contemplation, and where he planned his Ornithology. Of the faults of this little poem I will merely remark, that the initial quatrain is prosaic; and that the last line betrays an unaccountable deficiency of taste.

The lovers of rural scenery will learn with regret, that this fine piece of forest, consecrated to the Muses of poetry and natural history, by Wilson, is fast disappearing beneath the ax of the husbandman. Already is the brook, which was "o'erhung with alders and mantling vines," exposed to the glare of day;

the favourite haunts of the Wood Thrush are invaded; and, ere long, like his lamented historian, his place will be known there no more.

His poetical description of the Blue-bird, which originally appeared in the first volume of the Ornithology, has been copied into many publications, and still maintains its popularity. It contains some ill-constructed lines, and some rhymes so grossly defective, that we wonder how he could have tolerated them in a production of only half a dozen stanzas. The last quatrain of the fourth stanza contains false syntax; the construction is not regular and dependent, the adverb *so* being out of place. In the third stanza there is a grammatical error. Yet in this little poem, Wilson's happy talent of describing rural scenery, and the habits of birds, is conspicuous. The picture is charming, and more so to an American, who knows how beautifully accurate are its outlines. We see the disappearing of the snows of Winter; the busy labours of the fishermen; the wild geese labouring their airy way to the north; the lone butterfly fluttering over the meadows; the red maple buds bursting into life; and, finally, "the "herald of Spring," the well-known blue-bird, hailing "with his warblings the charms of the season." The warm sunshine brings out the frogs from their retreats, and their piping is heard throughout the marshes; the woodland flowers unfold their charms to the eye; and the industrious housewives repair to their gardens. The useful bird is beheld flitting through the orchard in search of noxious insects, he drags the devouring grub from the newly planted maize, and the caterpillars from their webs. The ploughman is pleased to behold him gleaning in his furrows, and the gardener suspends his labours to listen to his simple song. "When all the gay scenes of the summer are o'er," we observe him lingering about his native home, like a solitary outcast; we hear his melancholy adieu from the leafless branch, and mourn his departure as that of a beloved friend.

Of all Wilson's minor effusions this pleases me the most. Its imagery is derived from objects that are familiar to us, but yet

it is not trite; none but an attentive observer of nature could have conceived it, and expressed it so naturally.

It appears to have been his intention to concentrate all his poetical powers in his "Foresters," resting his hope of fame chiefly upon this production. That the time spent in constructing it, might have been better employed in writing a simple prose narrative of a journey, which was fruitful of interesting events, must be obvious to many of the readers of this poem, who are acquainted with the author's talents for description, and his appropriate diction, of which we are presented with examples in his letters and his Ornithology. On first reading this production such was my impression, and a re-perusal has not induced me to change my opinion.

In his exordium he is not very happy:

> "Sons of the city! ye whom crowds and *noise*
> "Bereave of peace, and Nature's *rural joys.*"

The noise of a crowded city may bereave its inhabitants of peace, but it is difficult to conceive how it can have a tendency to deprive them of the delights of the country.

In the account of his companions and himself he is too circumstantial, details of this kind correspond not well with the dignity of poetry:

> "An oilskin covering glittered round his head."
> "A knapsack crammed by Friendship's generous care
> "With cakes and cordials, *drams* and dainty fare;
> "Flasks filled with powder, leathern belts with shot,
> "Clothes, colours, paper, pencils,—and *what not.*"

Also in another place:

> "Full loaded peach trees drooping hung around,
> "Their mellow fruit thick scatter'd o'er the ground;
> "*Six cents procured us a sufficient store,*
> "*Our napkins crammed and pockets running o'er.*

Many of his rhymes are bad, particularly in the latter part of the poem, from the carelessness of the composition of which,

one is led to conjecture that he was weary of his protracted labour. We have *tale* and *smile; sent* and *want; blest* and *past; bespread* and *clad;* and many other similar imperfections.

The conclusion of the poem is a specimen of slovenly and inaccurate composition:

> "And when some short and broken slumbers *came*
> "Still round us roaring swept th' outrageous *stream*;
> "Whelm'd in the *deep* we sunk *engulf'd*, forlorn;
> "Or down the dreadful rapids helpless borne;
> "Groaning we start! and, at the *loudening war*,
> Ask our bewilder'd senses where we *are*."

In common with those who are ignorant of naval affairs, he commits a blunder in the use of the technical term *main-sheet*, mistaking it for a sail:

> ——— "They trim their thundering sail,
> "The boom and *main-sheet* bending to the gale."

The *main-sheet* is the rope by means of which the boom is governed, either eased off, or drawn in, as suits the state of the wind.

In a poem consisting of more than two thousand lines, it would be strange if some touches of excellence could not be found, some passages which prove that the author not only possessed poetical ideas, but also was familiar with the art of poetical expression. In his description of the calm, smoky, autumnal weather, which, in America, is usually denominated the *Indian Summer*, we are presented with a beautiful image, which I do not recollect to have seen elsewhere:

> "Slow sailed the thistle-down along the lawn."

The description of the Dutch farmer, and his habitation, would not disgrace the author of Rip Van Winkle.

In the enumeration of the miseries of a country schoolmaster there is much truth; and the picture is vividly and feelingly drawn from nature. Few had more experience than Wilson of the degraded condition of a teacher, when under the control

of the vulgar and ignorant; a state, compared with which the lot of the hewer of wood, and drawer of water, is truly enviable.

The account of *daddy* Squares, the settler, and that of Pat Dougherty, the shopkeeper and publican, contain some humour. The latter is a disgusting exhibition of one of those barbarians, whom the traveller often meets with in the interior of our country; and whose ignorance, bestiality and vice, have the tendency to disabuse one on the subject of the virtue and happiness usually attributed to the inhabitants remote from our large cities, which, instead of being the only nurseries of corruption, as is believed and affirmed, are the great schools wherein science, literature, piety and manners, are most effectively taught, and most beneficially practised.

The sketch of the Indian hunter is entitled to praise, as being vigorous and picturesque; and the description of the Bald or Gray Eagles, sailing amid the mist of the Cataract of Niagara, is a picture drawn with fidelity—it is poetical and sublime.

After this superficial review of the poems of Wilson, the question will naturally arise, ought we to consider him as one endued with those requisites, which entitle his productions to rank with the works of the poets, properly so called? To write smooth and agreeable verses is an art of no very difficult purchase; we see it daily exemplified by persons of education, whose leisure permits them to beguile a lonely hour with an employment at once delightful and instructive. But when one considers the temporary nature of the great mass of these fugitive essays, that they are read and remembered just so long as is the ephemeral sheet, or magazine, the columns of which they adorn; one can form no high expectations of the long life of that poetry which seldom rises beyond mediocrity, which sometimes sinks greatly below it; and which is indebted, in no small degree, to the adventitious aid of a name, resplendent in another walk of literature, for that countenance and support, which its own intrinsic merits, singly, could never claim.

I am aware that these brief observations on the poetry of Wilson, are not calculated to give pleasure to those of his

friends, who have been in the habit of regarding him as one possessing no small claim to the inspiration of the Muses. But let such remember the determination of a profound critic, that "no question can be more innocently discussed than a dead poet's pretensions to renown; and little regard is due to that bigotry which sets candour higher than truth."*

When Wilson commenced the publication of his History of the Birds of the United States, he was quite a novice in the study of the *Science* of Ornithology. This arose from two causes: his poverty, which prevented him from owning the works of those authors, who had particularly attended to the classification and nomenclature of birds; and his contempt of the labours of closet naturalists, whose dry descriptions convey any thing but pleasure to that mind, which has been disciplined in the school of Nature. But the difficulties under which he laboured soon convinced him of the necessity of those helps, which only books can supply; and his repugnance to systems, as repulsive as they are at the first view, gradually gave place to more enlarged notions, on the course to be pursued by him, who would not only attain to knowledge, by the readiest means, but who would impart that knowledge, in the most effective manner, to others.

As far as I can learn, he had access but to two systems of Ornithology—that of Linneus, as translated by Dr. Turton, and the "General Synopsis" of Dr. Latham.† The arrangement of the latter he adopted in his "General Index" of Land Birds, appended to the sixth volume; and he intended to pursue the same system for the Water Birds, at the conclusion of his work.

The nature of his plan prevented him from proceeding in regular order, according to the system adopted, it being his inten-

* Johnson's Preface to Shakspeare.

† The library of Wilson occupied but a small space. On casting my eyes, after his decease, over the ten or a dozen volumes of which it was composed, I was grieved to find that he had been the owner of only *one* work on Ornithology, and that was Bewick's British Birds. For the use of the first volume of Turton's Linneus, he was indebted to the friendship of Mr. Thomas Say; the Philadelphia Library supplied him with Latham.

tion to publish as fast as the materials accumulated; and he being in some measure compelled, by motives of economy, to apportion his figures to the space they would occupy in the plates, he thereby brings to our view, birds not only of different genera, but of different habits, associated in a manner not wholly unnatural, but abhorrent from the views of those systematists, who account every deviation from method an inexcusable fault.

With the art of perspective, it would appear, he was imperfectly acquainted; hence there are errors in his drawings, which the rigid critic cannot overlook. These errors occur most frequently in the feet and the tails of his birds, the latter of which, with the view of being characteristically displayed, are frequently distorted in a manner, which no expediency can justify. One can hardly forbear smiling at the want of correspondence between the figure of the Sharp-shinned Hawk, and the fence upon which it is mounted, the former, instead of appearing of the size of nature, for which the author intended it, absolutely assuming the bulk of an elephant.

But notwithstanding these defects, there is a spirit in some of his drawings which is admirable. Having been taught drawing from natural models, he of course became familiar with natural attitudes: hence his superiority, in this respect, to all authors extant. Among his figures most worthy of notice, I would particularize the Shore Lark, Brown Creeper, House and Winter Wrens, Mocking-Bird, Cardinal Grosbeak, Cow Buntings, Mottled Owl, Meadow Lark, Barn Swallows, Snipe and Partridge, Rail and Woodcock, and the Ruffed Grous.

The introduction of appropriate scenery, into a work of this kind, can have no good effect, unless it be made to harmonize, both as to design and execution, with the leading subjects; hence Wilson's landscapes, in the eye of taste, must always be viewed as a blemish, as he was not skilful in this branch of the art of delineation; and, even if he had been dexterous, he was not authorized to increase the expenditures of a work, which, long before its termination, its publisher discovered to be inconveniently burdensome.

The principal objections which I have heard urged against the Ornithology, relate to the colouring; but as the difficulties to which its author was subjected, on this score, have been already detailed, I will merely observe, that he found them too great to be surmounted. Hence a generous critic will not impute to him as a fault, what, in truth, ought to be viewed in the light of a misfortune.

In his specific definitions he is loose and unsystematic. He does not appear to have been convinced of the necessity of precision on this head; his essential and natural characters are not discriminated; and, in some instances, he confounds generic and specific characters, which the laws of methodical science do not authorize.

There is a peculiarity in his orthography, which it is proper that I should take notice of, for the purpose of explaining his motive for an anomaly, at once inelegant and injudicious. I have his own authority for stating, that he adopted this mode of spelling, at the particular instance of the late Joel Barlow, who vainly hoped to give currency, in his heavy Epic, to an innovation, which greater names than his own had been unable to effect.

"Some ingenious men," says Johnson, "have endeavoured to deserve well of their country by writing *honor* and *labor* for *honour* and *labour*, *red* for *read* in the preter-tense, *sais* for *says*, *repete* for *repeat*, *explane* for *explain*, or *declame* for *declaim*. Of these it may be said, that as they have done no good, they have done little harm; both because they have innovated little, and because few have followed them."

The recommendation of the learned lexicographer, above cited, ought to be laid to heart by all those whose "vanity seeks praise by petty reformation." "I hope I may be allowed," says he, "to recommend to those, whose thoughts have been perhaps employed too anxiously on verbal singularities, not to disturb upon narrow views, or for minute propriety, the orthography of their fathers. There is in constancy and stability a gen-

eral and lasting advantage, which will always overbalance the slow improvements of gradual correction."

As it must be obvious that, without books, it would be impossible to avoid error in synonymes and nomenclature, so we find that our author, in these respects, has rendered himself obnoxious to reproach.

That he was not ambitious of the honour of forming new genera, appears from the circumstance, that, although he found the system of Latham needed reformation, yet he ventured to propose but one genus, the *Curvirostra*, the characters of which are so obvious, that one is astonished that so learned an ornithologist as Latham, should have contented himself with arranging the species appertaining to it with others, the conformation of whose bills are so dissimilar. It may be necessary to state that the Crossbills had been erected into a separate genus, under the denomination of *Crucirostra*, by an author whose works Wilson had no knowledge of; and I have reason to believe that even the generic appellation of *Curvirostra* had been anticipated, by a writer on the ornithology of the northern parts of Europe. Brisson limited his genus *Loxia* to the Crossbills, and this judicious restriction appears to be now sanctioned by all naturalists of authority.

There is a species of learning, which is greatly affected by puny minds, and for which our author entertained the most hearty contempt: this is the names by which certain nations of Indians designated natural objects. Hence we no where find his work disfigured by those "uncouth and unmanageable words," which some writers have recorded with a solemnity, which should seem to prove a conviction of their importance; but which, in almost every instance, are a reproach to their vanity and their ignorance. Can any thing be more preposterous than for one to give a catalogue of names in a language, the grammatical construction of which has never been ascertained, and with the idiom of which one is totally unacquainted? Among literate nations it is a rule, which has received the sanction of prescription, that when one would write upon a

tongue, it is indispensable that one should qualify one's self for the task, by a careful investigation of its principles. But when the language of barbarians becomes the subject of attention, the rule is reversed, and, provided a copious list of names be given, it is not required of the collector, that he should have explored the sources whence they are derived: his learning is estimated by the measure of his labour, and our applause is taxed in proportion to his verbosity.

The style of Wilson appears to be well adapted to the subjects upon which he wrote. It is seldom feeble, it is sometimes vigorous, and it is generally neat. He appears to have "understood himself, and his readers always understand him." That he was capable of graceful writing, he has given us, in the preface to his first volume, which we here insert, a remarkable instance; which is one of the happiest, and most appropriate, compositions that our literature can boast of.

"The whole use of a preface seems to be, either to elucidate the nature and origin of the work, or to invoke the clemency of the reader. Such observations as have been thought necessary for the former, will be found in the Introduction; extremely solicitous to obtain the latter, I beg leave to relate the following anecdote.

"In one of my late visits to a friend's in the country, I found their youngest son, a fine boy of eight or nine years of age, who usually resides in town for his education, just returning from a ramble through the neighbouring woods and fields, where he had collected a large and very handsome bunch of wild flowers, of a great many different colours; and presenting them to his mother, said, with much animation in his countenance, 'Look, 'my dear 'ma, what beautiful flowers I have found growing 'on our place! Why all the woods are full of them! red, orange, 'blue, and 'most every colour. O, I can gather you a whole 'parcel of them, much handsomer than these, all growing in 'our own woods! Shall I, 'ma? Shall I go and bring you more?' The good woman received the bunch of flowers with a smile of affectionate complacency; and after admiring for some time the

beautiful simplicity of nature, gave her willing consent; and the little fellow went off, on the wings of ecstasy, to execute his delightful commission.

"The similitude of this little boy's enthusiasm to my own, struck me; and the reader will need no explanations of mine to make the application. Should my country receive with the same gracious indulgence the specimens which I here humbly present her; should she express a desire for me *to go and bring her more*, the highest wishes of my ambition will be gratified; for, in the language of my little friend, *our whole woods are full of them!* and I can collect hundreds more, *much handsomer than these.*"

In a work abounding with so many excellencies, it would not be difficult to point out passages of merit, any one of which would give the author a just claim to the title of a describer of no ordinary powers.

We select the following description, from the history of the Wood Thrush: "At whatever time the wood thrush may arrive, he soon announces his presence in the woods. With the dawn of the succeeding morning, mounting to the top of some tall tree, that rises from a low thick-shaded part of the woods, he pipes his few, but clear and musical, notes in a kind of ecstasy; the prelude or symphony to which strongly resembles the double-tongueing of a German flute, and sometimes the tinkling of a small bell. The whole song consists of five or six parts, the last note of each of which is in such a tone, as to leave the conclusion evidently suspended; the finale is finely managed, and with such charming effect, as to sooth and tranquillize the mind, and to seem sweeter and mellower at each successive repetition. Rival songsters, of the same species, challenge each other from different parts of the wood, seeming to vie for softer tones, and more exquisite responses. During the burning heat of the day they are comparatively mute; but in the evening the same melody is renewed, and continued long after sunset. Even in dark, wet and gloomy

weather, when scarce a single chirp is heard from any other bird, the clear notes of the wood thrush thrill through the dropping woods, from morning to night; and it may truly be said that the sadder the day the sweeter is his song."

Perhaps my admiration of this passage may be dependent, in some measure, upon the association of ideas, having been accustomed to frequent the favourite haunts of this exquisite musician, which are "low thick-shaded hollows, through which a small brook or rill meanders, overhung with alder bushes that are mantled with vines." But I can truly declare that I could never read it in an audible voice, the intenseness of my feelings always overpowering me.

He thus delightfully introduces his history of the Barn Swallow: "There are but few persons in the United States unacquainted with this gay, innocent, and active little bird. Indeed the whole tribe are so distinguished from the rest of small birds by their sweeping rapidity of flight, their peculiar aerial evolutions of wing over our fields and rivers, and through our very streets, from morning to night, that the light of heaven itself, the sky, the trees, or any other common objects of nature, are not better known than the swallows. We welcome their first appearance with delight, as the faithful harbingers and companions of flowery spring, and ruddy summer; and when, after a long, frost-bound and boisterous winter, we hear it announced that the "*Swallows are come!*" what a train of charming ideas are associated with the simple tidings!"

The following remarks on the current doctrine of the hybernation of Swallows are worthy of note. My object in introducing them into this place is twofold: to exemplify our author's talent for copious and equable composition; and to afford myself an opportunity of adding my feeble testimony to his, on a subject which one should suppose would have been long ago definitively ascertained.

"The wonderful activity displayed by these birds, forms a striking contrast to the slow habits of most other animals. It

may be fairly questioned whether among the whole feathered tribes, which heaven has formed to adorn this part of creation, there be any that, in the same space of time, pass over an equal extent of surface with the Swallow. Let a person take his stand on a fine summer evening, by a new-mown field, meadow or river shore, for a short time, and among the numerous individuals of this tribe that flit before him, fix his eye on a particular one, and follow, for a while, all its circuitous labyrinths —its extensive sweeps—its sudden, rapidly reiterated, zigzag excursions, and then attempt, by the powers of mathematics, to calculate the length of the various lines it describes; alas! even his omnipotent fluxions would avail him little here, and he would soon abandon the task in despair. Yet, that some conception may be formed of this extent, let us suppose that this little bird flies, in his usual way, at the rate of one mile in a minute, which, from the many experiments that I have made, I believe to be within the truth; and that he is so engaged for ten hours every day; and further, that this active life is extended to ten years (many of our small birds being known to live much longer, even in a state of domestication,) the amount of all these, allowing three hundred and sixty-five days to a year, would give us two millions one hundred and ninety thousand miles: upwards of eighty-seven times the circumference of the globe! Yet this *winged seraph*, if I may so speak, who, in a few days, and at will, can pass from the borders of the arctic regions to the torrid zone, is forced, when winter approaches, to descend to the bottoms of lakes, rivers, and millponds, to bury itself in the mud with eels and snapping turtles; or to creep ingloriously into a cavern, a rat hole, or a hollow tree, there to doze with snakes, toads, and other reptiles, until the return of spring! Is not this true ye *wise* men of Europe and America, who have published so many *credible* narratives upon this subject? The geese, the ducks, the catbird, and even the wren, which creeps about our outhouses in summer like a mouse, are all acknowledged to be migratory, and to pass into southern regions at the approach of winter;—the swallow alone, on

whom heaven has conferred superior powers of wing, must sink into torpidity at the bottom of our rivers, or doze all winter in the caverns of the earth. I am myself something of a traveller, and foreign countries afford many novel sights: should I assert, that in some of my peregrinations I had met with a nation of Indians, all of whom, old and young, at the commencement of cold weather, descend to the bottom of their lakes and rivers, and there remain until the breaking up of frost; nay, should I affirm, that thousands of people in the neighbourhood of this city, regularly undergo the same semi-annual submersion—that I myself had fished up a whole family of these from the bottom of the Schuylkill, where they had lain *torpid* all winter, carried them home, and brought them all comfortably to themselves again;—should I even publish this in the learned pages of the Transactions of our Philosophical Society,* who would believe me? Is then the organization of a swallow less delicate than that of a man? Can a bird, whose vital functions are destroyed by a short privation of pure air, and its usual food, sustain, for six months, a situation where the most robust man would perish in a few hours, or minutes.†

* Here there is a palpable allusion to a paper on the hybernation of swallows, which was published in the sixth volume of the Transactions of the American Philosophical Society. This paper was written by one Frederick Antes, and was communicated to the Society by the late professor Barton. It is probable that Wilson had also read the "letter on the retreat of house-swallows in winter, from the honourable Samuel Dexter, Esq. to the honourable James Bowdoin, Esq.;" and that "from the Reverend Mr. Packard to the honourable Samuel Dexter, Esq.," both of them published in the Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences of Boston, vols. 1 and 2.

Such communications are not calculated to do honour to any learned institution; and they ought to be rejected with scorn and reprehension.

† Carlisle, in his lecture on muscular motion, observes, that, "animals of the class *Mammalia*, which hybernate and become torpid in the winter, have at all times a power of subsisting under a confined respiration, which would destroy other animals not having this peculiar habit. In all the hybernating *Mammalia* there is a peculiar structure of the heart and its principal veins." Philosophical Transactions for 1805, p. 17.

"If all birds, except swallows," says Reeve, "are able to survive the win-

Away with such absurdities! they are unworthy of a serious refutation. I should be pleased to meet with a man who has been personally more conversant with birds than myself, who has followed them in their wide and devious routes—studied their various manners—mingled with them, and marked their peculiarities more than I have done; yet the *miracle* of a resuscitated Swallow, in the depth of winter, from the bottom of a millpond, is, I confess, a phenomenon in ornithology that I have never met with."

The subject of the supposed torpidity of swallows has employed many writers, but unfortunately too few of those, whose practical knowledge enabled them to speak with that certainty, which should always give authority to writings on natural history. Reasoning *a priori* ought to have taught mankind a more rational opinion, than that which the advocates of hybernation have unthinkingly promulgated. And is it not surprising that as experiments are so easy to be instituted, they should have been so seldom resorted to, in order to determine a problem which many may suppose to be intricate, but which, in effect, is one of the simplest, or most easy to be ascertained, of any in the whole animal kingdom? It is a fact, that all the experiments which have been made, on the subject of the hybernation of birds, have failed to give countenance, in the most remote degree, to this irrational doctrine.

From my personal experience, and from my earliest youth I have been conversant with the habits of birds, I feel myself justified in asserting, that, in the whole class *Aves*, there has

ter, and they alone are so overcome by the cold as to be rendered torpid, the difference must be found in their anatomical structure, and in their habits of life.

"Now, in the first place, it is certain that they have, in common with other birds, the three great functions of respiration, circulation, and assimilation: the similarity of their organs, and every circumstance in their mode of living, prove that they are subject to the same laws: they have also a very high temperature; and are peculiarly organized for rapid and long flight. The size of their lungs, the lightness of their bones, and the buoyancy of their feathers, render it absolutely impossible to sink them in water without a considerable weight; and they die instantly for want of air." Reeve on Torpidity, p. 43.

never been an authenticated instance known of a single individual capable of entering into that peculiar state denominated torpidity. Be it observed, that the narratives of credulous travellers, and superficial observers, and newspaper tales, on this subject, are of no authority, and must be utterly rejected. And yet these are the only sources whence naturalists have drawn their opinions on the question of torpidity. It is to be regretted that the authority of Linnæus himself should have given credit and currency to this opinion, and the more so since his example of sanctioning vulgar narratives by his acquiescence, without examination, has been followed by the majority of writers on ornithology, particularly those of Sweden, in which country, if we may place reliance on the transactions of the Academy of Upsal, the submersion of swallows is received as an acknowledged fact.

Linnæus no where tells us that he had ever seen a torpid swallow; but what shall we say of the English translator of Kalm's Travels, the learned John Reinhold Forster, who positively asserts that he himself had been an eye witness to the fact of swallows being fished up out of the lake of Lybshau, in Prussia, in the winter, and being restored to animation! a circumstance as impossible, if we are allowed to consider anatomical structure as having any influence on animal existence, as that a human being could be resuscitated after such a submersion.*

* I am unwilling to object falsehood to this accomplished traveller, and therefore must conclude that, in trusting to his memory, after a considerable lapse of time, he must have given that which he had received of another, as the result of his own experience. Mental hallucinations of this kind are not of rare occurrence.

That persons of the strictest veracity are frequently deceived by appearances, there can be no doubt; and therefore it becomes a source of regret when such individuals, in recording their remarks upon the phenomena of nature, omit those considerations, which, if observed, could hardly fail to guard them from error. Had our illustrious countryman, Franklin, when he *thought* he had succeeded in resuscitating a fly, after it had been, for several months, or perhaps years, embalmed in a bottle of Madeira wine, but exercised that common sense, of which he possessed so large a share, and bethought him to

Dr. Reeve, in treating of the migration of birds, makes the following judicious observations: "It is singular that this subject should still admit of doubt, when it seems so easy to be decided; yet every month we see queries and answers about the migration of swallows; and every year our curiosity is tempted to be amused with marvellous histories of a party of these birds diving under water in some remote quarter of America. No species of birds, except the swallow, the cuckoo, and the woodcock, have been supposed to remain torpid during the winter months. And what is the evidence in favour of so strange and monstrous a supposition? Nothing but the most vague testimonies, and histories repugnant to reason and experience.

"Other birds are admitted to migrate, and why should swallows be exempt from the general law of their nature? When food fails in one quarter of the world, their instinct prompts them to seek it in another. We know, in fact, that such is their

repeat the experiment, he would have soon discovered, that when the vital juices of an animal become decomposed by an acid, and their place supplied by a spirituous fluid, something more than the influence of solar heat will be requisite to re-animate a fabric, which has, in effect, lost that upon which existence mainly depends.

The writer of this sketch has made several experiments upon flies, with the view of ascertaining the possibility of their being resuscitated after having been drowned in Madeira wine; but in every instance his experiments had a different result from Dr. Franklin's. He submerged them in the wine for different periods, viz. six months, eighteen hours, six hours, one hour; and in the last instance they showed signs of life until ten minutes before they were removed for the benefit of the air and sun. Of three flies used in the last experiment, only one was reanimated, but after a few convulsive struggles it expired.

Three flies were afterwards drowned in pure water; and after having been kept in that state for seventeen hours, they were exposed to the sun for several hours, but they gave no signs of life.

Upon a re-perusal of Franklin's "Observations upon the Prevailing Doctrines of Life and Death," in which the story of the flies is inserted, it appears obvious to me, that the flies which "fell into the first glass that was filled," were either accidentally thrown into it, or had been in it unperceived, and on this supposition a recovery from suspended animation would have nothing in it which might be thought marvellous.

natural habit: we have the most unexceptionable proofs that swallows do migrate; they have been seen at sea on the rigging of ships; and Adanson, the celebrated naturalist, is said to have caught four European swallows fifty leagues from land, between the coast of Goree and Senegal, in the month of October.

"Spallanzani saw swallows in October on the island of Lipari, and he was told that when a warm southerly breeze blows in winter they are frequently seen skimming along the streets in the city. He concludes that they do not pass into Africa at the approach of winter, but remain in the island, and issue from their retreat on warm days in quest of food."*

The late professor Barton of Philadelphia, in a letter to the editor of the Philosophical Magazine, thus comments upon the first paragraph of the above remarks of Dr. Reeve: "It appears somewhat surprising to me, that an author who had so long had the subject of the torpidity of animals under his consideration, should have hazarded the assertion contained in the preceding paragraph. Dr. Reeve has certainly read of other birds besides the swallow, the cuckoo, and the woodcock, which are said to have been found in a torpid state. And ought he not to have mentioned these birds?

"In my 'Fragments of the Natural History of Pennsylvania,' I have mentioned the common humming-bird (*Trochilus colubris*) as one of those American birds which do occasionally become torpid.

"In regard to the swallows, I shall say but little at present.

* An Essay on the Torpidity of Animals, by Henry Reeve, M. D. p. 40.

The author of this narrative, in the middle of December, 1820, was at Nice, on the Mediterranean; and had the gratification of beholding the common European Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) flying through the streets in considerable numbers. M. Risso, a well-known naturalist, and a resident of the place, informed him that swallows remained there all winter.

On the 20th February, 1818, being at the mouth of the river St. John, in East Florida, I observed several swallows of the species *viridis* of Wilson; and, on the 26th, a flight of them, consisting of several hundreds, coming from the sea. They are the first which reach us in the spring from the south. They commonly arrive in Pennsylvania in the early part of March.

I have, at this time, in the press, a memoir on the migration and torpidity of these birds. *I am confident that I shall be able to convince every candid philosopher, that great numbers of swallows, of different species, do occasionally pass into a state of torpidity*, more or less profound, not merely 'in some remote quarter of America,' but in the vicinity of our capital cities, where there are *some men* of genuine observation and inquiry, and who are as little propense to believe the marvellous in natural history, as any philosophers elsewhere.

"I do not suppose that all the swallows of North America become torpid. It is my present opinion, and it was my opinion when I published the 'Fragments' in 1799, that the swallows, in general, are migratory birds. But subsequent and *very extensive* inquiries have convinced me, that the instances of torpid swallows are much more frequent than I formerly supposed they were; and that there are two species of the genus *Hirundo*, which are peculiarly disposed to pass the brumal season in the cavities of rocks, in the hollows of trees, and in other similar situations, where they have often been found in a *soporose* state. These species are the *Hirundo riparia*, or sand swallow; and the *H. pelasgia*, which we call chimney swallow. *There is no fact in ornithology better established, than* THE FACT *of the occasional torpidity of these two species of Hirundo!*"*

It is not strange that the "*very extensive*" inquiries of our learned professor should have had a result so different from those of Wilson, an ornithologist infinitely better qualified than himself to investigate a question of this kind, by his zeal, his capacity, and his experience. Who those men of *genuine ob-*

* Tilloch's Philosophical Magazine, vol. 35, p. 241.

"Naturalists," says Dr. Barton in another place, "have not always been philosophers. The *slight and superficial* manner in which they have examined many of the subjects of their science; the credulity which has accompanied them in their researches after truth; and the *precipitancy with which they have decided upon many questions of importance;* are proofs of this assertion." Memoir concerning the fascinating faculty of serpents.

servation and inquiry were, who resided in the vicinity of our capital cities, he did not condescend to inform us; if he had done so, we should be enabled to determine, whether or not they were capacitated to give an opinion on a subject, which requires qualifications of a peculiar kind.

At the time in which the professor wrote the above cited letter, I know of but *two* naturalists in the United States whose opinions ought to have any weight on the question before us, and these were William Bartram and Alexander Wilson, both of whom have recorded their testimony, in the most positive manner, against torpidity.

The "Memoir on the Migration and Torpidity of Swallows," wherein Dr. Barton was confident he should be able to convince every candid philosopher of the truth of his hypothesis concerning these birds, never issued from the press, although so publicly announced. And who will venture to say that he did not, by this suppression, manifest his discretion? When Wilson's volume, wherein the swallows are given, appeared, it is probable that the author of the "Fragments" was made sensible that he had been writing upon subjects of which he had little personal knowledge; and therefore he wisely relinquished the task of instructing philosophers, in these matters, to those more capable than himself of such discussions.

Naturalists have not been sufficiently precise when they have had occasion to speak of torpidity. They have employed the term to express that torpor or numbness, which is induced by a sudden change from heat to cold, such as is annually experienced in our climate in the month of March, and which frequently affects swallows to so great a degree as to render them incapable of flight. From the number of instances on record of these birds having been found in this state, the presumption has been that they were capable of passing into a state of torpidity, similar to that of the Marmots, and other hybernating animals.

Smellie, though an advocate for migration, yet admits that swallows may become torpid. "That swallows," says he, "in the winter months, have sometimes, though very rarely, been

found in a torpid state, is unquestionably true. Mr. Collinson gives the evidence of three gentlemen who were eye-witnesses to a number of sand-martins being drawn out of a cliff on the Rhine, in the month of March, 1762."* One should suppose that Smellie was too good a logician to infer that, because swallows had been found in the state described, they had remained in that state all winter. A little more knowledge of the subject would have taught the three gentlemen observers, that the poor swallows had been driven to their retreat by cold weather, which had surprised them in their vernal migration; and that this state of numbness, falsely called *torpidity*, if continued for a few days, would for ever have destroyed them.

It is now time to resume the subject of Wilson's Ornithology, as the reader will, probably, consider that we have transgressed the limits which our digression required.

Dr. Drake, in his observations upon the descriptive abilities of the poet Bloomfield, thus expresses himself: "Milton and Thomson have both introduced the flight of the sky-lark, the first with his accustomed spirit and sublimity; but probably no poet has surpassed, either in fancy or expression, the following prose narrative of Dr. Goldsmith. "Nothing," observes he, "can be more pleasing than to see the Lark warbling upon the wing; raising its note as it soars, until it seems lost in the immense heights above us; the note continuing, the bird itself unseen; to see it then descending with a swell as it comes from the clouds, yet sinking by degrees as it approaches its nest; the spot where all its affections are centred; the spot that has prompted all this joy." This description of the descent of the bird, and of the pleasures of its little nest, is conceived in a strain of the most exquisite delicacy and feeling."†

I am not disposed to dispute the beauty of the imagery of the above, or the delicacy of its expression; but I should wish the reader to compare it with Wilson's description of the Mocking-

* Philosophy of Natural History, chap. 20.

† Drake's Literary Hours, No. 39, Edition of 1820.

bird, unquestionably the most accomplished songster of the feathered race.

"The plumage of the Mocking-bird, though none of the homeliest, has nothing gaudy or brilliant in it; and, had he nothing else to recommend him, would scarcely entitle him to notice; but his figure is well proportioned, and even handsome. The ease, elegance and rapidity of his movements, the animation of his eye,* and the intelligence he displays in listening, and laying up lessons from almost every species of the feathered creation within his hearing, are really surprising, and mark the peculiarity of his genius. To these qualities we may add that of a voice full, strong, and musical, and capable of almost every modulation, from the clear mellow tones of the Wood Thrush, to the savage scream of the Bald Eagle. In measure and accent he faithfully follows his originals. In force and sweetness of expression he greatly improves upon them. In his native groves, mounted upon the top of a tall bush or half-grown tree, in the dawn of dewy morning, while the woods are already vocal with a multitude of warblers, his admirable song rises pre-eminent over every competitor. The ear can listen to *his* music alone, to which that of all the others seems a mere accompaniment. Neither is this strain altogether imitative. His own native notes, which are easily distinguishable by such as are well acquainted with those of our various song birds, are bold and full, and varied seemingly beyond all limits. They consist of short expressions of two, three, or at the most five or six syllables; generally interspersed with imitations, and all of them uttered with great emphasis and rapidity; and continued, with undiminished ardour, for half an hour, or an hour at a time. His expanded wings and tail, glistening with white, and the buoyant gayety of his action, arresting the eye, as his song most irresistibly does the ear. He sweeps round with enthusiastic ecstasy—he mounts and descends as his song swells or dies away; and, as my friend Mr. Bartram has beautifully expressed it, 'He bounds aloft with the celerity of an arrow, as if to

* The reader is referred to our author's figure of this bird, which is one of the most spirited drawings that the records of natural history can produce.

recover his very soul, which expired in the last elevated strain.' While thus exerting himself, a bystander, destitute of sight, would suppose that the whole feathered tribes had assembled together, on a trial of skill, each striving to produce his utmost effect, so perfect are his imitations. He many times deceives the sportsman, and sends him in search of birds that perhaps are not within miles of him; but whose notes he exactly imitates. Even birds themselves are frequently imposed on by this admirable mimick, and are decoyed by the fancied calls of their mates; or dive, with precipitation, into the depths of thickets, at the scream of what they suppose to be the Sparrow Hawk.

"The Mocking-bird loses little of the power and energy of his song by confinement. In his domesticated state, when he commences his career of song, it is impossible to stand by uninterested. He whistles for the dog: Cæsar starts up, wags his tail, and runs to meet his master. He squeaks out like a hurt chicken, and the hen hurries about with hanging wings, and bristled feathers, clucking to protect her injured brood. He runs over the quiverings of the Canary, and the clear whistlings of the Virginia Nightingale or Red-bird, with such superior execution and effect, that the mortified songsters feel their own inferiority, and become altogether silent; while he seems to triumph in their defeat by redoubling his exertions.

"This excessive fondness for variety, however, in the opinion of some, injures his song. His elevated imitations of the Brown Thrush are frequently interrupted by the crowing of cocks; and the warblings of the Blue-bird, which he exquisitely manages, are mingled with the screaming of Swallows, or the cackling of hens; amidst the simple melody of the Robin we are suddenly surprised by the shrill reiterations of the Whip-poorwill, while the notes of the Kildeer, Blue Jay, Martin, Baltimore, and twenty others, succeed, with such imposing reality, that we look round for the originals, and discover, with astonishment, that the sole performer in this singular *concert* is the admirable bird now before us. During this exhibition of his powers, he spreads his wings, expands his tail, and throws him-

self around the cage in all the ecstasy of enthusiasm, seeming not only to sing, but to dance, keeping time to the measure of his own music. Both in his native and domesticated state, during the solemn stillness of night, as soon as the moon rises in silent majesty, he begins his delightful solo; and serenades us with a full display of his vocal powers, making the whole neighbourhood ring with his inimitable medley."

I will give but one example more of our author's descriptive powers, and that will be found in his history of the Bald Eagle. As a specimen of nervous writing, it is excellent; in its imagery, it is unsurpassed; and in the accuracy of its detail, it transcends all praise.

"This distinguished bird, as he is the most beautiful of his tribe in this part of the world, and the adopted *emblem* of our country, is entitled to particular notice. He has been long known to naturalists, being common to both continents, and occasionally met with from a very high northern latitude, to the borders of the torrid zone, but chiefly in the vicinity of the sea, and along the shores and cliffs of our lakes and large rivers. Formed by nature for braving the severest cold; feeding equally on the produce of the sea, and of the land; possessing powers of flight capable of outstripping even the tempests themselves; unawed by any thing but man; and from the ethereal heights to which he soars, looking abroad, at one glance, on an immeasurable expanse of forests, fields, lakes and ocean, deep below him; he appears indifferent to the little localities of change of seasons; as in a few minutes he can pass from summer to winter, from the lower to the higher regions of the atmosphere, the abode of eternal cold; and thence descend at will to the torrid or the arctic regions of the earth. He is therefore found at all seasons in the countries which he inhabits; but prefers such places as have been mentioned above, from the great partiality he has for fish.

"In procuring these he displays, in a very singular manner, the genius and energy of his character, which is fierce, contemplative, daring and tyrannical: attributes not exerted but on

particular occasions; but when put forth, overpowering all opposition. Elevated upon a high dead limb of some gigantic tree, that commands a wide view of the neighbouring shore and ocean, he seems calmly to contemplate the motions of the various feathered tribes that pursue their busy avocations below: the snow-white gulls slowly winnowing the air; the busy Tringæ coursing along the sands; trains of ducks streaming over the surface; silent and watchful Cranes, intent and wading; clamorous Crows, and all the winged multitudes that subsist by the bounty of this vast liquid magazine of nature. High over all these hovers one, whose action instantly arrests all his attention. By his wide curvature of wing, and sudden suspension in air, he knows him to be the *Fish-hawk* settling over some devoted victim of the deep. His eye kindles at the sight, and, balancing himself, with half-opened wings, on the branch, he watches the result. Down, rapid as an arrow from heaven, descends the distant object of his attention, the roar of its wings reaching the ear as it disappears in the deep, making the surges foam around. At this moment the looks of the Eagle are all ardour; and levelling his neck for flight, he sees the Fish-hawk emerge, struggling with his prey, and mounting into the air with screams of exultation. These are the signal for our hero, who, lanching into the air, instantly gives chace, soon gains on the Fish-hawk, each exerts his utmost to mount above the other, displaying in these rencontres the most elegant and sublime aerial evolutions. The unincumbered Eagle rapidly advances, and is just on the point of reaching his opponent, when with a sudden scream, probably of despair and honest execration, the latter drops his fish; the Eagle poising himself for a moment, as if to take a more certain aim, descends like a whirlwind, snatches it in his grasp ere it reaches the water, and bears his ill-gotten booty silently away to the woods."

Perhaps there is no similar work extant, which can so justly lay claim to the merit of originality as Wilson's Ornithology. In books on natural history, in general, we rarely meet with much that is new; and it is not unusual to behold laboured per-

formances, which are undistinguished by any fact, which might prove that their authors are entitled to any other praise than that of diligent compilers. But in the work before us, we are presented with a fund of information of so uncommon a kind, so various, and so interesting, that we are at no loss to perceive that the whole is the result of personal application, directed to the only legitimate source of knowledge—Nature, not as she appears in the cabinet of the collector, but as she reveals herself in all the grace and loveliness of animated existence.

Independent of those pleasing descriptions, which will always ensure the work a favourable reception, it has higher claims to our regard, by the philosophical view which it takes of those birds which mankind had, with one consent, proscribed as noxious, but which now we are induced to consider as auxiliaries in agriculture, whose labours could not be dispensed with without detriment. A vagrant chicken, now and then, may well be spared to the hawk or owl who clears our fields of swarms of destructive mice; the woodpecker, whose taste induces him to appropriate to himself the first ripe apple or cherry, has well earned the delicacy, by the myriads of pestilential worms of which he has rid our orchards, and whose ravages, if not counteracted, would soon deprive us of all fruit; if the crow and the black-bird be not too greedy, we may surely spare them a part of what they have preserved to us, since it is questionable, if their fondness for grubs or cut-worms did not induce them to destroy these enemies of the maize, whether or not a single stalk of this inestimable corn would be allowed to greet the view of the American farmer.

The beauties of this work are so transcendent, that its faults, which are, in truth, mere peccadillos, are hardly perceptible; they may be corrected by one of ordinary application, who needs not invoke to his aid either much learning or much intelligence. A book superior in its typographical execution, and graphical illustrations, it would be no difficult matter to produce, since the ingenuity of man has advanced the fine arts to a state of perfection, sufficient to gratify the most fastidious

choice; but who could rival it in those essentials which distinguish it from all other similar undertakings, and which constitute it one of the most valuable offerings to natural science which taste and genius has ever produced?

Ord: Sketch of the Life of Alexander Wilson
1828

Received: Bound in ¼ natural color cloth; damaged.

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